

the prayer of going nowhere

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the prayer of going nowhere

by [kneeinjury](#)

Summary

"A friend of mine is getting married this weekend," Aleksander tells her, his voice tinny in her headphones.

"Good for them," she says absently, stuffing her keys and wallet into her bag and waving goodbye to her coworkers as she clocks out.

"Are you busy?"

"Huh?"

"Are you busy? Would you want to come with me? I forgot about it until today and I'm down a plus one."

"Oh, I don't know, Sasha. I won't know anyone there and-"

"No, this is good, I want to introduce you to them, anyway," he interrupts.

She pauses, smiles at nothing as she waits for her train. "Just friends?"

"Just friends. I promise. There'll be an open bar."

It's been almost six months since they started sleeping together and she hasn't fallen hopelessly in love yet; she supposes one outing together won't undo her completely.

"Fine. Since there's an open bar."

or: the fw b au

Notes

no one:

me: what if the darkling was a soft dom

that burdened pain

She's almost drunk when she meets him for the first time.

Zoya's plied her with melon balls and never left her hand without a seltzer or glass of wine, determined to "just loosen you up, darling, you work so much, I don't remember the last time I saw you good and drunk. Let me take care of you for the night, you just have a good time," and who is she to deny Zoya when she talks to Alina so sweetly and kisses her neck so softly?

About three drinks in, she's restless and horny and tired of listening to Nadia complain about her boss, and she's settled into the corner of Nikolai's couch, her feet in Nikolai's lap as she eyes Zoya from across the room. Nikolai digs a knuckle into her instep before running a hand up her bare calf and squeezing, leaning forward into her space.

"Should I go turn down the covers?" he asks, and pecks her on the lips. Alina nods and smiles, lets her legs fall open when he leaves and gives Zoya a heated look from across the room.

Nadia rolls her eyes and leaves to get a refill.

On his way to the bedroom, Nikolai is intercepted by a knock at the door, and when he opens it, he gives a little whoop and leans out of the doorway to pull someone into a hug, thumping enthusiastically on their back.

The someone turns out to be the hottest person Alina's ever seen in her life. Suddenly her plans to fall into bed with Zoya and Nikolai again have been shoved to the backburner without a care, and she can only focus on tall, dark, and handsome.

The boys are talking in the kitchen when she goes to "refill" her "drink," and when she turns her head slightly to see if she can catch a glimpse of him over her shoulder without anyone noticing, he's already looking at her.

He's in the middle of a conversation with an animated Nikolai, but he's looking directly at her, and she feels the hairs on the back of her neck rise.

Her cheeks burn as she turns away, fiddling with the wine opener on the counter, turning the cold steel of the corkscrew around and around and around. It only takes another minute before she can feel him at her back, the warmth of him wrapping around her like a fog. She turns to look at him, propping herself up against the countertop.

He looks at her. He really *looks* at her, in such an active way that she feels almost like a voyeur, like she's burst in on him in a private art gallery just to watch him watch her.

"Aleksander," he says, his voice pitched low and intimate.

"Alina," she breathes. They go back to looking at each other.

"How do you know Nikolai?" she says after a beat.

"We work at the same hospital," Aleksander says mildly, pouring a glass of red wine, and then another. She takes it with a demure smile.

Over his shoulder, Alina can see Zoya making very suggestive eyebrows at her, which she does her best to ignore.

Aleksander asks her what she does for work (behavioral technician), where she's from (here), what she does in her free time (rehabbing free shit she finds on Facebook marketplace and puzzles).

She finds out Aleksander is not a doctor, but the CFO at the hospital uptown where Nikolai's halfway through his pediatrics residency ("ew," she tells him, and he laughs), that he's from St. Petersburg ("cold!" she says, and he laughs again), and that he likes to ride horses at a barn just outside the city on the weekends ("I don't think I can tease you about that one," she says, "that actually sounds nice.").

They spend fifteen minutes learning enough general information about each other before Alina feels they've done enough talking, and is tired of staring at his lips and would like to kiss them now.

"I'm going to go to the ladies' room," Alina says into her wine glass, tipping it back to drain the dregs of the cabernet, "it's just down the hall and to the right, I shouldn't be long."

Aleksander tips his head once, and she sets her glass down on the counter with a decisive *clink*. She can feel his eyes follow her down the hallway and into Zoya and Nikolai's fuck-off big spare bathroom.

Her skin hums with nervous energy as she washes her hands and smooths Nikolai's coconut lotion into the dryness of her knuckles and fingers. She glances in the mirror at the unlocked door handle.

A minute passes. Then two. Then three. She's starting to get annoyed, wonders if she wasn't obvious enough, and reaches for the door when it swings open in front of her, Aleksander on the other side.

"Sorry. Nikolai," he explains, hushed in the echo of the tiled bathroom.

"Say no more," she says, and lunges at his mouth. He responds just as eagerly, wrapping her in his arms and opening his mouth to her kiss immediately.

"I'm really not looking for anything serious right now," she says, breathless, between kisses.

"That's alright," Aleksander says against the slope of her neck, and sucks on the hinge of her jaw. She whimpers, and his grip on the back of her neck tightens delightfully.

Just as she gets his shirt unbuttoned enough to put her tongue on his collarbone, he pushes her off him and drops to his knees, backing her up against the countertop and lifting her skirt, his eyebrows raised minutely.

She scrambles to get her skirt up over his head, hopping up onto the vanity behind her, and gasps when his hands go to the waistband of her panties to tug them off unceremoniously.

“Oh, look at you,” he says when he’s got her bare in front of him, “pretty girl, pretty cunt. Just knew it would be.” He presses a kiss to the top of each thigh. She whines and puts her hand in his hair, her chest warming in satisfaction when she tugs at it and his lids drop.

His tongue is hot and sinful against the flushed curl of her pussy, slipping in to run along the inside of her lips delicately, taking his time. He presses an open mouth kiss against her, then slides his tongue inside, curving to tease along her entrance.

It’s good, it’s *so* good, but it’s not enough, and she’s felt molten and warm since he stepped into the party and *looked* at her the way he did. She whines, thinking of the heat of his gaze on her in a crowded room, the way he made her feel like she was the only one he came there to see.

“Not enough, is it, sweetheart?” he croons, and strokes his two middle fingers against the seam of her, pushes them past the fold of her cunt to circle her entrance, and presses one inside. Her eyes slip closed at the intrusion, a sweet preparation, and as he strokes her singing nerves, she whispers, “more, please,” and is rewarded with the press of another finger along with a choked sound of arousal from Aleksander.

She opens her eyes to see his brows drawn together in concentration, but not on the pink, flushed heat in front of him. He’s looking at her face, his mouth open slightly, as if she’s startled him a little bit.

“So polite,” he says, sounding awed, “so sweet. How did you get this sweet, Alina?”

The words settle in her chest and *burn*.

Suddenly, she wants very badly to be sweet for him, to show him that she's good, that she deserves his hands on her, deserves all the pleasure he's doling out so generously. She floods with warmth and slick arousal, walls squeezing around his fingers, and her hips buck up on his hand, bumping his against his chin and leaving behind a wet shine.

"Be good for daddy," he chastises gently, his fingers twisting inside her.

Alina gasps in what she hoped would be a scandalized manner, but when it comes out as helplessly turned on, he just lowers his mouth back to her cunt, looking up at her smugly. *Got your number.*

When he puts his lips around her clit and sucks, the only thing keeping her tethered to earth is the sharp pain in her knuckles as she tightens her grip on his hair.

The air in her lungs is thick and heavy, her head full of sensation and nothing else: his fingers pressing bruises into the soft flesh of her thigh, his mouth sealed over her cunt, sucking the thoughts from her mind. His tongue inside her, his beard scratching at the soft skin around her entrance.

She wants- she wants to stay here, like this, for as long as he'll let her. She wants to be consumed this way, held by him, dissolving under his careful, strong hands.

Whispering against her skin, he says, "why don't you be a good girl for me, Alina, and come on my fingers, hm?"

It's almost too much, the lash of his tongue on her cunt, the slick, heady pull on her throbbing clit, his words settling hot in her belly. She tries to muffle a cry into her hand, stuttering wetly against the heel of her palm as she comes, warm and rolling and submersive, in his mouth.

Her fingers go tingly, heat and stark cold rushing through her in waves. Aleksander pulls his mouth off of her with a smacking sound, and lays a kiss to her inner thigh, sucking at the skin there to leave a red mark behind, poppies on gold.

“Perfect, Alina, you were perfect for me. So sweet, coming in daddy’s mouth like that,” he says, hushed against her. She whimpers and squirms, reaching for his collar to pull him closer to her.

He stands and cradles her face in his hands, kissing her thoroughly, deep in her mouth the way she likes. It occurs to her distantly that she’s never felt so... understood in a sexual encounter, especially with someone she’s just met.

Should it feel like this? Should the brush of his hands on her shoulders as he fully undresses her be so warm and intimate? Should it feel so familiar, the way he strokes her hair back to kiss her neck as he cups her breasts in both hands?

She’s so lost in the haze of familiarity that when he reaches into his wallet and pulls out a condom, she whines and plucks it from his hand, leaning in to kiss him.

“I’m on the pill,” she says against his mouth, “and I’m clean. I haven’t slept with anyone in- in a while.”

He groans, deep in his throat, and closes his eyes, says, “You... are very bad for my self-control.”

Alina can see him hesitating, but the idea of him, hot and heavy and bare inside her, filling her up- she’d do anything for it.

She kisses a line along his jaw, soft and sweet, and whispers, “please, daddy. I want you to fill me up.”

The sharp exhale sounds like it’s physically pushed out of his lungs, and he snatches both her wrists in one hand tightly. Alina lets out an excited little gasp, heart rate quickening, and shifts her hips on the counter, warmth growing between her legs, her stomach churning with anticipation.

Aleksander sucks on her jaw as he unbuckles his belt and drops his pants enough to get his cock out, strokes it a couple times before lining it up with her entrance.

“Oh- oh, daddy,” she whispers as he presses in, thick and full and *perfect*, exactly like she knew he would be.

She falls forward, face turned into his neck, and lets herself go limp, lets him push all the way in until he bottoms out with a rough sound in the back of his throat.

“Sweet little cunt, sweet little baby,” he says as he puts a hand on her hip, rocking her forward. He still has her wrists gathered in his left hand like a bouquet, her fingers going slack as she lets him take control.

Her head goes fuzzy and her eyelids flutter. She feels... soft. Around the edges. She feels like she's been hollowed out this whole time, just now finding out what it means to be whole.

Distantly, she's aware that he's talking to her, his voice low in her ear, nice little things about how soft and warm she is, how perfectly she fits his cock, how good she's being for him. She sighs and settles into his chest, letting him fuck her slow and deep. His arms come around her in a firm cradle, one hand on the back of her neck.

Time passes in a hazy slide; she only registers the resonant timbre of his voice against her ear and the aching perfection of him thrusting in and out of her. He drives deeper than she's ever felt anyone go before.

The sharp, fizzing spark of orgasm starts to flutter in her belly. She clutches at his neck, dragging her lax, open mouth along the ridge of his collarbone and starts babbling, “gonna come, gonna- daddy, I-”

“Come on, sweetheart, come for me,” he tells her, his voice going rough and thick, “come on daddy's cock, that's it.”

She shakes and comes apart around him, pressed against his body like she needs him to breathe, like she'll burst and scatter into pieces without the solid warmth of him grounding her.

He coos at her as she comes down, as her head clears a little, telling her how sweet she is, how good she looks, and his pace picks up, fucking into her urgently. She clenches down on him, so full and hot she can barely breathe, the aftershocks of orgasm shuddering through her, and lets him use her, kisses at his jaw and asks him *please, please, please, daddy*, begs him to fill her up.

With a guttering gasp, he seals his mouth to hers, kisses her like he did earlier, like he wants to open her up and settle inside her, make a home out of her body. She tightens her thighs around his waist and he comes, slamming into her so deep she thinks she can feel him in her throat.

For a few moments, the only sound in the bathroom is the sharp inhale-exhale of them trying to catch their breath. Alina's heart feels like it's going a million miles an hour, and as the fog in her mind begins to dissipate, her cheeks flush.

She can't believe she let him- she's only known him for what, an hour? The shock of it hits her like a slap to the face. The things she *said*. She didn't even know she was into that.

As her pulse calms, her body temperature drops, and she shivers, sweat cooling unpleasantly on her back.

Aleksander doesn't say anything, but he reaches for her sweater without pulling out of her, and tugs it over her head like she's a child. The looseness in her limbs is still there, and she lets him thread her arms limply through the sleeves. He kisses her forehead when it emerges through the collar.

"All right?" he murmurs. She nods, but she isn't quite sure that she is. The distance between her mind and body hasn't quite closed yet, and she's never felt like this before.

He watches her closely, seems to accurately gauge the blank look on her face, because he chafes his hands up and down her arms before wrapping her up against his chest again and tucking her head beneath his chin.

A few minutes pass like that, Alina curled in and Aleksander curled around like a pair of mismatched parentheses.

After a while, the steady rise and fall of his ribcage sets her off and she heaves a full-body sigh. Oxygen rushes to her head; she blinks.

“Hello,” Aleksander says softly. She looks up at him as he cradles her chin in his hand.

“I’m going to pull out, okay?” he warns, and she nods, and means it this time. They both wince a little as he does, but he’s as gentle as he can be, and after tucking himself away and buttoning his pants, he cleans up after himself, wiping her down carefully with a warm, wet tissue.

He cleans her face as well, wiping away mascara streaks without a word, and runs his fingers through her hair, combing it back into something that doesn’t look quite so freshly-fucked.

Under his touch, the heaviness in her chest lessens, her mind settling back into her body. But Aleksander looks pensive.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have-” he cuts himself off, pressing his mouth in a firm line and shaking his head.

“It’s all right,” Alina says, “I liked it. I liked it a lot, actually.” She ducks her head a little, embarrassed.

He looks at her, intense, the way he did out in the kitchen, gaze a little too much for a second, then the corner of his mouth ticks up. “You were very good for me.”

Alina melts a little. He kisses her mouth softly, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear before pulling away and rubs his thumb across her bottom lip without speaking.

She bites her lip nervously as he collects her skirt off the floor and kneels, holding it out for her to step into it. “Like I said, I’m not looking for a- a relationship or anything right now, but... We could maybe do this again. If you want.”

He looks up at her with a wicked grin.

She leaves the party minus a pair of panties and plus one phone number.

She almost doesn’t expect him to call, tries not to get her hopes up, tells herself she *shouldn’t* expect him to call. His phone number sits in her contacts like a taunt: *Aleksander Morozova*. She can’t bring herself to text him first.

In her agonizing, it feels like she waits a hundred years to hear from him, but it’s only lunchtime that next day when her phone lights up.

She tries to tamp down a smile as she answers.

“Hello?” As if she doesn’t know who’s calling, as if she hasn’t been feverishly checking her notifications for the past five hours.

“Alina. It’s Aleksander. How are you?”

She rolls her eyes. “Hi! Good! How are you?” Shakes her head, *don’t sound so eager. Idiot.*

“I’m doing well, thanks,” he sounds like he’s smiling, “I was wondering if you were available tomorrow evening, around 8?”

“Uh, let me check,” she says, and pulls away to tap at her phone as if checking her nonexistent schedule, “yeah, tomorrow works.”

“Perfect! I’ll send a car. Text me your addre-” he hangs up.

“I- oh.” Alina shrugs and sends him her address, and after a moment of deliberation, changes his contact name to “DADDY 🍆💧🍆”

She sees Aleksander regularly over the next several weeks, usually at his place, which is on the rich people side of town and has a doorman in a cute little red suit. When she comments on this he just rolls his eyes and says something about making too much money to not waste it on expensive living.

The one time he comes to her apartment, she shows him around her one-bedroom a little bashfully and tries to just drag him into bed so she doesn’t have to think about how much nicer his place is, but he stops in the doorway and says “hello, there,” to his feet, where her cat is sniffing his shoes suspiciously.

“Sorry,” she says, “he doesn’t get a lot of visitors.”

“That’s all right,” Aleksander says, bending, and lowers his hand to be inspected. “What’s your name?”

“Oh, this is Paul.”

He looks up at her, face caught between amusement and bewilderment. “Paul?”

She nods seriously. “Paul Rudd.”

Aleksander nods back at her as his expression settles into mock solemnity. “It’s very nice to meet you, Mr. Rudd.”

Paul sniffs his hand and meows loudly before twining in between Aleksander’s shins, rubbing his face against his pant legs affectionately. Alina’s eyebrows rise.

“He likes you.”

“Oh, thank God.”

Alina rolls her eyes and pushes him into her bedroom, closing the door on a miffed-looking Paul.

The reason Aleksander doesn’t come back to her apartment is because Alina was interrupted halfway through a truly spectacular blowjob by Paul yowling and sticking his paw underneath the door in an attempt to tunnel his way through.

The doorman at Aleksander’s place learns her name, which she finds embarrassing at first, but he’s kind and cheerful and always seems happy to see her, so she doesn’t let it bother her.

Aleksander’s apartment is huge and overlooks the river, with giant windows that let in the eastern sun each morning. She assumes. She’s only ever there in the evenings.

Today, though, Aleksander's taken advantage of the bank holiday to spread Alina out on his giant leather sectional and bury his face between her legs. He brings her to three slow, rolling orgasms (all before noon!) with his fingers inside her, lazily stroking at her with his middle and index fingers, smirking against her clit every time she whimpers and comes.

She's sighing out the last of the third climax when he kisses his way up her body, dipping his tongue into her navel and stopping to take her left nipple into his mouth on the way up.

"Always taste so sweet, malyshka," he says in her ear, and lays a hot, wet kiss to her neck.

"What does that mean?" she says as he notches the head of his cock against her entrance. He breathes a laugh out around a smile.

"Baby," he tells her, "it means baby."

She shivers. His face is warm in her hands when she pulls him down for a kiss, but she tells herself coldly that it doesn't mean anything, that people say all kinds of things in bed, that she isn't getting attached, *won't* get attached.

She tells herself this until he pushes inside her, until the fullness steals her breath and her thoughts and all she can think about is how heavy and right he feels.

It's warm outside, but Aleksander's apartment is always cold; he keeps the air conditioning cranked up at all times. She thinks, absently, as he slowly rocks in and out of her, that maybe he does that so she seeks the warmth of his arms, his bed.

It's fine, probably. They always work up a sweat when she's over here, anyway.

They move in tandem, her tits pressed flush to his chest, tongue in his mouth. His hips are pressed into the cradle of her thighs, and she winds up against him, sinuous, seeking as much skin contact as she can get.

“Fuck,” he gasps into the crook of her neck, “you feel fucking perfect. How’d you get this perfect?”

She whines and threads her arms around his shoulders, pulling him closer.

“Aleksan-”

“Sasha,” he interrupts, stilling.

“What?” She can’t think, the weight of him inside her is too much, she feels fuzzy.

“My friends call me Sasha.”

She pulls back slightly to look at him. “Just friends?”

“Just friends.”

She hums and kisses him, close-mouthed. “Sasha,” she whispers, “will you go back to fucking me now?”

“Is that what you want? You want me to fuck you?” he murmurs against her lips, smile lifting the corners of his mouth.

“Yes, please.”

“I don’t know that I believe you, malyshka-” Alina shivers “-you’ll need to be a little more convincing.”

She rolls her eyes but diligently wiggles her hips, hitching herself back and forth on his cock, and the pressure steals her breath, pushes a gasp out of her: “*please*, daddy, will you fuck me?”

“Since you asked so nicely,” he responds, lazy and indulgent, and pulls out to slam back into her, rubbing his thumb across her clit in a sweet rolling motion. Alina yelps at the sudden, bruising thrust, swears she can feel it behind her ribcage.

“There you go, sweetheart, take it, just like that, perfect-”

It creeps up on her, this floating feeling, the dizzy separation of her conscious mind from her physical body. Always comes to her when Aleksander’s deep inside her. It’s like he pushes out everything else, leaves a hollow space only he can fill. It should worry her, maybe, but she likes it too much to examine it thoroughly.

She becomes just a feeling, just a concept. The rest of the world doesn’t exist around her. All she knows is his hands on her, is the drive of his cock in her slick cunt. *Alina* narrows down to *this*, the throbbing between her hips, the sensation of being possessed like this, cradled in his hands.

Somewhere outside her body, she wishes she could stay here, in this separation, in this space of being and feeling and not thinking. And she knows she can’t, knows that Sasha always lets her stay here as long as she needs, doesn’t make her come back down before she’s ready, but she does wish-

It would be so nice to just stay.

So for now, she just buries herself in it, surrenders to the riptide, lets his voice be her buoy and acknowledges that she may, in fact, be lost at sea.

"A friend of mine is getting married this weekend," Aleksander tells her, his voice tinny in her headphones. The sound of afternoon traffic filters through the microphone and forms a thin rushing noise around his voice.

"Good for them," she says absently, stuffing her keys and wallet into her bag and waving goodbye to a couple of her coworkers as she clocks out.

"Are you busy?"

"Huh?"

"Are you busy? Would you want to come with me? I forgot about it until today and I'm down a plus one."

"Oh, I don't know, Sasha. I won't know anyone there and-"

"No, this is good, I want to introduce you to them. Nina and Fedyor and Ivan and everyone," he interrupts.

She pauses, smiles at nothing as she waits for her train. "Just friends?"

"Just friends. I promise. There'll be an open bar."

It's been almost six months since they started sleeping together and she hasn't fallen hopelessly in love yet; she supposes one outing together won't undo her completely.

"Fine. Since there's an open bar."

Nerves begin to swim in her stomach as they step out of the Uber, but with a glass of champagne and a warm smile from Aleksander's friend Fedyor, she starts to settle into the conversation and relax enough to lean into Aleksander's side.

The wedding is on the south side of town, down by the river under a great wooden pavilion, flowers hung from the arches and hooked onto the backs of chairs. Alina doesn't know anyone there, but they sit with Sasha's friends on the bride's side of the aisle, and they all seem nice.

Nina walks down the aisle right as the sun sets behind the altar, bathing her in a rich, golden light, and the groom- Alina forgets his name, it was something Swedish or Norwegian maybe- weeps openly.

She almost starts when Aleksander's arm settles on the back of her chair, but he's warm against the bare skin of her back, and she just shifts a little closer to him, trying to leach a little heat from his side. It's September, she reasons, and the evenings have started to get cooler. She's just chilly, that's all.

There's a live band at the reception, and Alina has enough champagne to let Sasha drag her onto the dance floor when the first dances are over and the music takes a turn uptempo.

She can't suppress a giggle when he twirls and dips her. At the table behind them, Fedyor loudly and drunkenly sings "I love you, *baby*, and if it's quite alright-" right into Ivan's long-suffering ear.

The blood rushes to her head when Aleksander lets her up, and she stumbles and falls into his chest, still laughing.

"They're sweet," she says.

"They are."

She glances up at his fond tone, and finds that he's *looking* at her again, in that way he does. Her stomach swims, warm with sweet wine and other things.

"Are you busy tomorrow?" he asks her, and she shakes her head.

She sighs through her nose, warm and loose, sliding a hand underneath his suit jacket. She's almost able to get a handful of his ass before he intercepts her, snatching her wrist away and leaning down to whisper in her ear.

"Behave, little girl."

Alina shudders and leans into him, tucks herself under his arm and tries to make herself smaller.

"How much have you had to drink?" he asks, his voice low.

"Enough."

"Enough?"

"Not too much," she breathes, eyes caught on his mouth.

He steadies her as she sways against him, hands on her waist. "Should I call a car?"

She nods.

Their Uber driver is either a saint or a pervert, because he doesn't say anything the entire ride home, despite the fact that Alina is half in Sasha's lap, squirming against him and trying her very best to get him to finger her under her dress.

"Alina," he says through a laugh, and she pulls back from sucking on his neck to pout at him.

"You can wait until we get inside, I think, sweetheart."

"Not when you talk to me like that, I can't," she retorts, and buries her face in his neck again just to inhale the warm, dark scent of him.

Aleksander leaves the driver with a generous tip and a withering glare.

The ride up the elevator is excruciating; if they were alone she would just try to stick her hand down his pants right here, but just before the door slides closed, a withered hand shoots out and grips it with a surprising amount of force.

The owner of the hand is a wrinkled, bent little woman draped in jewels, leaning on a clear acrylic cane tipped with a gold cap.

They both go silent as she presses the button for the 17th floor with one long, red fingernail, vibrating with want as they stand beside each other, hands at their sides.

The eleventh floor can't come soon enough.

Aleksander nods and says "ma'am," under his breath as they exit the elevator, Alina lifting a hand and smiling nervously. The woman sniffs without looking at either of them.

As the elevator door closes, Alina dissolves into giggles at his side, her cheeks pink, tears starting to gather at the corners of her eyes. He stifles an incredulous laugh into the crown of

her head, tossing an arm around her shoulders.

It's not that funny, she knows it's not that funny, but she's champagne warm and she feels pretty and Sasha's looking at her like she's said something incredible and life-changing and she can't help herself when she lurches up onto her toes to kiss him.

He responds with a hand in her hair, an open mouth and welcoming tongue.

If she could crawl inside him, she would.

His apartment is just as cool as it always is, but she's flushed and eager and doesn't stop Aleksander when he starts to strip her out of her dress the second she's through his bedroom door. He follows his hands with his mouth, kissing her skin as he exposes it, and Alina can't suppress the quiver that runs through her.

The press of his hand on the curve of her neck is warm and firm when he pushes her down to the bed, and she tries to shake away the full, settled feeling that washes over her as she looks up at him. It'll burn her, she fears.

"Good girl, Alina," he murmurs, stroking up and down her throat with the backs of his knuckles, "so sweet for me, so obedient."

Laying flat on her back, she lets him direct her legs straight up into the air, pressed together as he rolls her panties down her thighs and chucks them over his shoulder onto the floor behind him. Legs still elevated, he kisses the backs of her thighs, scraping his teeth along the corded muscle and soft flesh, until he settles belly-down on the bed below her, and arranges a leg over each shoulder.

This time he isn't delicate, doesn't warm her up, just seals his mouth to her cunt and *sucks*, and she nearly shrieks from the sharp, sudden sensation.

She's spent the whole night getting slowly worked up to the point of desperation, and her untouched clit throbs under his attentions. He works a couple of fingers inside her, and she sighs into it; she wanted him *so* badly, all day.

When he arrived at her apartment to pick her up in that stupid black suit she almost jumped him right there, almost said fuck the wedding, we'll send them a nice gift, and it didn't even occur to her until they were in the car halfway across town that-

You don't normally send a joint wedding gift from you and your fuck buddy. And you definitely don't send a joint wedding gift from you and your fuck buddy to someone you don't even know. She chewed off most of her lipstick by the time they got to the venue, and when he turned and held out his hand to help her out of the car, part of her wanted to slam the door in his face and tell the driver to get the hell out of dodge.

Even now, as he loses himself in her cunt, as he glides a hand up her side, sweeps it over the low curve of her belly, she can feel her chest start to shake when she reaches down and tangles their fingers together.

The low, urgent sound of satisfaction he lets out reverberates inside her, shivering through her nerves.

He looks up at her without pulling off, sucking on her clit and pulling his fingers in a beckoning motion that sears through her. It almost sets her off then, that scalding look he gives her, as if just being looked at, just being seen and taken in is enough to get her off.

She swivels her hips on his face, grinding up against the firm, dual-pointed pressure of his chin and nose, cunt throbbing around his fingers. A thin, stuttering whimper falls out of her, and Sasha pulls off with a soft lick to her clit with the flat of his tongue.

His fingers continue to torture her, curling and stroking at the humming pressure in her hips, threatening to swell and break over her.

"That's it, Alina, you're doing so well, want to see you come for daddy," he tells her, voice sinuous and sweet. Her fingers clench around his in time with the slick, pulsing grip of her

walls.

The slippery circle he traces around her clit sets an itching, fizzy spark coasting along her skin, in her belly, coiling around her center like a snake. She feels- she doesn't know how she feels, doesn't know this foreign pressure building inside her, she feels like she's about to shatter.

Hips grinding down on his hand, body out of control, everything feels *hot*, it's too much, she doesn't know if she can stand it, she's going to fly apart. She scrabbles at his hand, still twined with hers, brings it up to her mouth, desperate for something to focus on that isn't this insane, unbearable arousal he's pulling out of her.

Aleksander's mouth falls open, staring at her as she sucks at his middle fingers, wrapping both her hands around his wrist. She feels delirious with it, with the taste of him, with the weight of his gaze on her face and his fingers on her tongue.

"My beautiful girl," his voice is rough with want, "I can't fucking stand it sometimes, you're too-" he cuts himself off with a broken sound that Alina feels echoing within her own chest, too lost to voice it.

He leans up over her, tensing his whole arm from the shoulder and *driving* into her almost mechanically, like he's powered by a diesel engine, it's too much. The press of his forearm on her sternum as she sucks, desperate, on the rough pad of his ring finger, is so heavy, so good. He's all around her: his smell, his warmth, his weight.

It starts in the back of her mind, low, near the nape of her neck. A dense, blurry cloud blossoms formlessly from her brain stem and begins to shroud her.

The bed jostles beneath the force of Aleksander's thrusts, but she barely registers the fact that she's being shoved up toward the headboard with each movement. All she can see, hear, smell, taste, feel is Aleksander Aleksander Aleksander Aleksander Aleksander Aleksander.

It feels like she's running toward a cliff, approaching a precipice she's never fallen from before; it feels higher and more inevitable than anything else, urgent in a new, alien way. The

urgency presses at her from inside, a vibrating pressure point between her hips that Aleksander keeps digging into, relentless.

Rising tide, pulsing electricity, hot-cold shivering energy thrumming in her core- she snaps and comes on his fingers with a tremulous cry, Sasha's spit-slick hand gripping her chin, forcing her eyes up to meet his.

"That's it, give it to daddy, baby. So good for me, so-" she interrupts him with a sob as she squirms under him, coming in waves, and a confusing, searing rush of wetness comes spurting out of her, soaking Aleksander from fingertip to elbow.

His mouth drops open and his brows draw together in shock even as he keeps drilling at her with his fingers- *jesus fuck*, he says thickly- and she can't take it, it's too much, she tries to push him out from in between her legs but his left hand slips from her chin to her throat, collaring her against his bed.

"I can't, Sasha, I can't," she pants at him.

"Yes, you can, sweetheart, I know you can do it. One more for me. Just like that, yes, don't you want to be good for daddy?"

And she does, she does.

Tears slide down her temples into her hairline and prickle on her scalp. She reaches for him, just wants to be pressed up against him as much as she can. He obliges, dropping down onto her with enough momentum to push a soft *whoosh* out of her lungs, but she needs the pressure. Needs something to ground her in this form, keep her from leaving entirely.

He keeps working at her cunt, and she really didn't think she could come again like this, but she can feel another orgasm rising on a hot wave in her belly. *Daddy knows best*, she thinks absently.

She jolts when he rolls his thumb over her clit; she hadn't even realized he was ignoring it until he makes contact, too distracted by the inexorable fullness inside her.

"Please, daddy, please, please," Alina doesn't even know what it is she's begging for, and a hush falls over her brain with the realization that she doesn't need to know.

She doesn't need to know because she doesn't doubt for a single second that Aleksander does.

This thought occurs to her, and that's all it takes for her to slip down. All the tension leaks from her muscles, even the ones in her abdomen that are clenching in preparation for a second climax. It feels like she's watching herself from the outside going completely lax in his hold. She lets the arousal build inside her on its own, doesn't work for it, doesn't involve herself in the act of getting off.

Everything's in Sasha's hands now, and she can't do anything to stop the feeling of rightness from washing over her. Doesn't think she'd want to even if she could.

He's talking to her, face pressed to the spot where her jaw meets her throat. His beard tickles.

Maybe he's telling her how good she is, how much he wants her, how sweet and soft and warm she is under his hands. Words don't penetrate at this point, not in any distinct way. Whatever he's saying, she knows it's probably encouraging and filthy, so she just closes her eyes as she comes again, clenching around his fingers, three now, it feels like.

Another splash of liquid hits her thigh, less this time, but it's enough to pull a deep-throated groan from Aleksander. The dull set of his teeth at her jaw comes through like a brand.

The throb of it pulses through her, and she grinds down on his hand, drawing it out. He keeps worrying at her clit and kisses her face, whispering her name against the skin of her neck.

It takes a minute or two, but she surfaces a little, the room coming further into focus as she climbs the thread of Sasha's voice.

He's petting at her flank like he's soothing a horse, pressing kisses to her face and murmuring softly about how well she did. She swallows, her throat dry, and turns into him.

Dimly, she registers that he's shifted to lay down next to her and turned her body so that she's mostly on top of him, her front curled into his side the way his arm has curled around her waist.

"Okay?" he asks her, eyes focused and intent. She nods and swallows again.

Her hand is going a little numb from the way she has it crooked into her chest, and she lifts it and shakes it out in the narrow space between their chests. When did he take his clothes off? She blinks the thought away.

He catches her wrist and rolls a thumb across the meat between her thumb and index finger, rubbing out the pins and needles with a soft look on his face.

Alina shifts, bracing herself on one foot to press closer to his side, but her ankle lands in something cold and wet, and she abruptly remembers that she did, in fact, squirt all over Sasha's bed. And hand. And arm.

"Oh, my God," she says, pushing off his chest to sit up, "I can't believe-"

"You've never done that before?" he asks. She shakes her head, looking at the wet spot incredulously.

Behind her, Aleksander sits up next to her and shifts his jaw. His Adam's apple bobs. She doesn't see the way he pulls in a deep breath to steady himself.

“I’ve never felt like that before. It felt... different.” *No one’s ever touched me like that before*, she doesn’t say.

The wetness between her legs warms as she thinks about how feverishly Aleksander drove his fingers into her, asking her, *begging* her, walking the thin line between demanding and encouraging.

She turns and puts her face in his neck, inhales deeply, and shivers. His arm comes around to stroke up and down her spine with a light touch.

Placing her hand on his face, she lifts her mouth to be kissed, tells his lips, “Sasha...”

When she reaches into his boxers- black silk, if she had the presence of mind to, she’d roll her eyes- and wraps her hand around him, he catches her wrist again.

“You should rest, malyshka.”

She whines through her nose. “Don’t want to rest, want you to fuck me.”

“I know, sweetheart, but you really, ah-” she traces a line up the tendon in his throat with her tongue, “you really wore yourself out. Let me change the sheets and put you to bed.”

Suddenly it feels urgent that she gets him inside her, the idea of sitting on his cock, being filled up as deep as she’s ever been, it seems like a necessity, crucial as the flow of oxygen to her brain.

“No, no, Sasha, *please*, I need it, I-” her voice goes high and reedy, begging, and she squirms, rolling her body against his. The weight of his cock in her hand- it’s a horrible tease, how could he take it away from her?

“Alright, alright,” he shushes her, and lets her crawl into his lap.

She kneels over him as he shifts, pulling his underwear off, and as he settles back down and puts his hands on her, she reaches down to line him up with her entrance. He bats her hand away, grips himself, and rubs the tip against her.

Under her, he has to turn his face up to look her in the eye, but only a little, and she knows when he pushes inside, and she gets to sit on it properly, their heights will line up perfectly.

She threads her arms around his shoulders as he presses inside, their noses brushing against each other. His breath is warm against her mouth and he looks at her so hard she thinks he might leave an imprint on her face.

The stretch is slick; he breaks her open so nicely. If she could see her own face right now she knows she'd find a strained, agonized expression. There aren't any words for it, for how right he feels, how big he feels inside her.

I should've never let him kiss my mouth, she thinks.

How does she come back from this? This was exactly what she was trying to avoid. She tries to tell herself it isn't anything: it's just... exceptionally intense sex, she's just a little drunk, he's just too good with his hands.

But her head starts to go empty again, thoughts pushed out as he pushes in. Each time, it steals her breath. She should be used to it by now, probably, but she's just so *full*, there's no more room inside her for anything but him. Her cunt does its best to tremble around him, but she's stretched so tight and the fit is so exact that there's no breathing room.

For a moment, he just lets her adjust, just pulls her all the way down onto him until he bottoms out and she's fully seated with his arms wrapped tight around her waist, one hand splayed broad between her shoulder blades. She always likes it this way best: pressed against each other until it's just her and him and skin and sweat.

He lets her sit on his cock, fully and unmoving but for the barest flutter between her hips and the stuttering rhythm of their breathing.

She feels small, she feels like nothing, she feels unwrapped and tasted and consumed.

When he eventually starts to move, it's nothing more than a slow, filthy grind, rocking her back and forth with his hands on her hips. The drag of his cock inside her pulls on her nerves like a bow on violin strings. She can feel the vibrations, low and harmonic, shoot up from her pelvis to her throat, where they catch on a sigh.

"Sasha."

"I know," he says.

She can't look at his face anymore, it's too sharp, too bright. His neck is warm against her mouth when she tucks into him.

Inhale, exhale, she tries to ground herself. Reality starts going slippery again. She lets it, lets her limbs go loose with it, lets Aleksander guide her body back and forth. It aches so nicely, this distance between her and her mind.

Letting him fuck up into her like she doesn't even have a say in the matter- was this what she was looking for this whole time? How can she miss something she's never had?

The world narrows: just him and her and them together, bodies pressed together at the seams as if she's stitched to him. It's a nice thought.

When she comes again, it's a helpless, trembling thing, a yield to the space he takes up inside her, the pressure and the warmth of his cock filling her cunt like it's all they were made to do together. She feels him follow her a moment later, the hot spill of his seed against her walls, shivering but resolute.

He lets her stay down in the fuzzy neitherness of her in-between space for a while, stays a warm, solid presence next to her- gives her gifts of touch and sound, indistinct but no less generous for their nebulous shape.

She comes to with his knuckles running a slow line up and down the curve where her neck meets her shoulder. The tempo pulls her up and helps clear the cloud from her brain. She sighs deeply just to feel the sweet stretch when her chest expands and collapses, and Aleksander opens his eyes and looks at her.

“Back with me?” he asks quietly.

“Yeah,” she whispers. Feels too intrusive, too much of a scrape and sting to speak any louder.

He doesn’t make her talk, doesn’t even make her listen, just watches her with half-lidded eyes and strokes her neck.

Eventually the dry, sticky feel of her mouth starts to bug her, and she shifts to sit up, only to be met with the firm press of Sasha’s palm to her sternum.

“Stay.”

“Sasha-”

“Let me get it, you brat.”

“I still have to pee, officer, let me up,” she says with a fond (too fond, *too* fond, Alina, rein it back in, she thinks) smile. He narrows his eyes but eases off.

Aleksander, like Nikolai and Zoya, has a stupid big en suite, with a rain shower and separate bathtub, deep and wide enough to fit three Alinas side by side. She closes the door behind her and sits on his fancy toilet equipped with a built-in bidet.

The sound of her pee hitting the bowl is the only thing that keeps her brain from filling with the flood of panicked thoughts she's only barely keeping at bay. She takes three deep breaths and shakes her head. It was just sex.

When she comes back from the bathroom, Aleksander's pulling the last corner of a clean sheet onto the mattress, and she unfolds the comforter sitting at the end of the bed and helps him spread it out. He hands her a glass of water without a word, settling under the blanket and watching her as she kneels in the middle of the bed to dig her phone out from where it had gotten shoved under one of his pillows.

"Ugh," she says at her phone when she sees that it's past 2 in the morning.

"What?" he says sleepily under her.

"I'm going to have a hell of a time finding an Uber this late," she says quietly, sits down and sets her phone on the nightstand to try and figure out where her clothes went. Sasha had torn them off in a bit of a hurry earlier.

Before she can find anything, though, his arm lands around her waist and she's tugged back into bed, the sheets settling around them with a flutter.

"Just stay here," he mumbles into the curve of her shoulder. Alina forces herself not to stiffen in his arms.

She's never stayed the night before, barely even sticks around long enough for the afterglow to wear off. They fuck, they come, she leaves, the end. Clean and simple. Easy for her to maintain distance, to stay just far enough away from the edge that she doesn't slip and fall in. She's toed far too close to the line tonight as it is.

But now he's offering... what? A sleepover? She didn't even ask to stay. She was just complaining about having to get an Uber in the middle of the night, but before she had a chance to reach for her bra - hanging on the arm of his fancy old man lamp, how did it even get there? - he's pulling her back under the covers to stick his cold nose in her neck.

She yelps a little at the contact, bats at his forearm and grumbles about how cold he keeps his apartment. She opens her mouth to protest, but is interrupted by the sound of a whistling little snore, so she just smiles to herself a little fearfully and pulls the comforter over her shoulder.

In the morning, she wakes up a little too warm and slightly sweaty where she's pressed up against his skin. At some point in the night she must have turned to face him, because her head is tucked beneath his chin and his breath rushes downward, past her ear in a rhythmic sweep, in and out and in and out.

Tables turned, she lies as still as possible and takes him in: where the straight ridge of his nose curves ever so slightly to the right, the gentle slope of his mouth, the place on each cheek where his beard doesn't ever *quite* fill in.

Is this what he feels like all the time? This privileged and awed, just from the simple act of seeing? Surely not, she thinks. Aleksander isn't the type of man to be passive about the things he wants. If he wanted her for real, she would know by now.

Reluctantly, she disentangles herself and stumbles to the bathroom, gathering her clothes along the way, sweet-sore between her legs and pleasantly achy everywhere else. She stares blankly at the glossy white tile of his shower wall while she pees, trying to convince herself that nothing has to change between them.

In her head, she sternly reminds herself why she needs to pull it together; it's been so nice to have someone on call who's both good at sex and generally a tolerable human being. Aleksander always makes sure she gets off first (and repeatedly), he has his own place without roommates, and he doesn't expect anything of her. And he fucks her like *that*. Also, he smells nice.

The last thing she wants to do right now is set herself up to get her heart broken. She knows she's too emotional, too romantic, for this to work for very long, and after a night like last

night, surely she's only shortening the lifespan of this little arrangement. Especially if she starts sleeping in his bed, in his arms.

But it would be so convenient to be able to stay over every once in a while. His bed is huge and very comfortable and probably very expensive, and he lives all the way downtown, like a million blocks from her place, and even though he always insists on paying for her Uber, midnight hookups are never exactly a quick little jaunt for her.

And a vicious, masochistic little part of her wonders: how long can she walk this tightrope? How close can she play it before it all comes tumbling down around her?

How much love can she wring out of this situation before she's turned away again?

She chews on her cheek in thought and dresses in front of his enormous vanity mirror, frowning at her greasy hair before tucking it into a tight bun at the nape of her neck.

Soft footsteps approach, and she watches him lean against the doorjamb. They look at each other in the mirror in silence for a long minute. He has a hickey on his neck. Her lips twitch.

He inhales and says, "I'm going to shower and make breakfast if you're hungry." His voice is rough with sleep.

"Oh, that's-" she starts, but her protest is cut off by a loud, gurgling complaint from her stomach, and Sasha politely stifles a laugh as he turns on the showerhead.

Alina doesn't even pretend not to watch as he strips out of his boxers, and he doesn't even pretend not to hold the door open for her behind him. She only hesitates for a second before pulling her dress over her head and following him into the steam.

A month or so later, she and Nikolai spend the better part of an hour talking Zoya into ditching her sleek hot girl club for the quiet, divey bar they frequented in college, where the clientele mainly consist of 60-something Polish immigrants, and the potato-based foods are fried in duck fat. The jukebox is real and coated in a perennial layer of greasy fingerprints and is always playing Willie Nelson.

Zoya hates it. Nikolai and Alina love it.

Zoya mumbles vague, insubstantial threats at the two of them as they shuffle her into a booth and laugh when she asks for a drink menu.

After a couple of drinks, Alina's cheeks feel warm and her tongue tingles. Zoya complains about her younger sister's wedding planning and then complains about the music, and Nikolai hums along good-naturedly. They gossip about Genya and David and whether or not Genya knows that everyone knows she's pregnant, and how long it will take before Nadia forgets herself and brings it up at dinner some evening.

"How're things with what's his face?" Nikolai asks her around a mouthful of fries.

"Aleksander? Your co-worker?" Nikolai just waves a hand at her. "It's- we're not, like- it's fine. We're just hooking up, it's not... a relationship or anything," she says, brow furrowing.

"Sure," Nikolai says, and tosses back the rest of his beer.

She doesn't even attempt to protest.

The server comes by to collect their dishes, and Nikolai orders another round that Zoya insists she won't drink. (She will.)

Alina's phone buzzes on the table. She tries to resist looking at it, she really does. She leaves it alone for a full ten seconds before flipping it to read the newest notification. It's not from Sasha.

She purses her lips and sniffs, falling back against the booth with a small huff, and turns her head to look out the window. It's started to rain since they came in. The streetlight on the corner fuzzes into a halo in the mist.

"Ohh, was someone expecting a text from daddy?" Nikolai coos at her. She rolls her eyes and shoves her boot between his knees, smiling sweetly at his responding grunt.

Zoya pets at Nikolai's cheekbone, tells him, "you're very stupid, darling," and plants a kiss on his face.

Alina laughs, finger circling the rim of her martini glass, and Nikolai tosses an arm over Zoya's shoulders, points at Alina with his beer, and says, "A hundred bucks says you'll be living together by the first of the year."

"Kolya," Zoya hisses, digging her elbow into Nikolai's ribs, and his smile drops as he realizes what he's said. But the damage is done. Alina's face freezes, her hand going still on the edge of her glass.

"Alina," Zoya starts, but Alina shakes her head and smiles, tells her *it's fine*, tells her *I'm over it*, tells her *I don't even think about it anymore*.

Nikolai orders a plate of apology tater tots and Alina thinks about it. She thinks about it a lot.

She thinks about it at work. She thinks about it on the train. She thinks about it in her apartment, laying in bed, in the shower, cleaning the bathroom, feeding the cat.

She thinks about it at dinner with Genya and Tamar, and she doesn't notice them exchange a concerned glance over their appetizer because she's thinking about it too hard. She thinks

about it in the cab they split on the way home, and she thinks about it climbing the stairs to her apartment.

She thinks about when Aleksander texts her, and she thinks about it when she ignores each one. She thinks about it when he calls her, and “DADDY 🍑💧🍆” lights up her screen, and she thinks about it when she lets the calls go to voicemail.

She thinks about it while she boils water for tea and stares at nothing, replaying the scene in her mind.

She thinks about how excited she was, the giddy way her stomach turned the night before, as she lay in bed and tried to go to sleep because the quicker she fell asleep, the quicker tomorrow arrived.

She'd made a key and put it in a little box and wrapped the box and everything. She made Zoya put her finger on the ribbon so she could tie the perfect bow. She'd been too excited to see how reserved Zoya's smile had been, and how she'd tapped her acrylic nails against each other with a pensive look on her face.

She'd been so excited she didn't notice how carefully Zoya and Genya and Tamar had worded their responses to her announcement that she was finally asking Mal to move in with her.

Tamar: *oh wow that's a big step!!!*

Genya: *I'm happy you're so excited! Have you talked about this with him yet?*

Zoya: *haven't u been together for like six months or something*

Genya: *As long as YOU'RE happy, we're happy!*

(Well. Genya and Tamar were careful.)

She'd been far too excited to consider the possibility of rejection, too excited to anticipate how crushing his refusal would be, and how the subsequent dumping would leave her devastated beyond belief.

She didn't respond to their texts asking how it went. She laid in bed for five hours and cried and watched a show about lady murderers and then she got up and told herself that she was 25 years old and she could handle a breakup without falling apart, and that she just needed to stop thinking about it, and she'd be fine. Then she made 2 gallons of chili that she pawned off on all her friends over the next week, and Nikolai wouldn't stop calling it her "grief chili," but he also wouldn't stop telling her how good it was.

It helped lessen the sting of knowing that she's *too clingy, and you don't know how to give me any space. It's like you don't even have your own personality. I just don't like being around you that much, to be honest.*

It didn't make her forget, but it helped.

Eleven months later, after shoving it down all at once and refusing to think about it, she thinks about it and thinks about it and thinks about it and thinks about it.

She's thinking about it on a Saturday evening, laying sideways across her bed with a joint in her hand, a purring cat on her chest, and a show about cult leaders getting whacked on her tv.

She's thinking about it when someone starts banging on her door, and she jumps, stubs out the joint, and pushes Paul off of her, lunging underneath her bed for the metal baseball bat Nikolai got her for her 21st birthday.

The door is still being abused when she approaches as quietly as possible and puts her face up to the peephole, only to find herself staring at Aleksander's very familiar neck. She pulls

back and sighs, letting the bat drop to the floor and propping it up in the corner under her coat hook.

“Cut it out, I have neighbors,” she calls through the door, and unlocks it, but leaves the chain latched, peering at him through the crack.

“What do you want.”

“Alina,” he says, impatient.

“*What?*” she says.

“Will you just-” he closes his eyes and sighs through his nose, “will you just let me in? Please? I just want to talk to you.”

She closes the door. Her sigh skates across the doorjamb where she’s pressed her forehead against it, the slick white paint sticky under her skin. She unlatches the door and opens it again, fixing Aleksander with a look.

“Why have you been ignoring me?” he asks before she has a chance to say anything.

“I haven’t been *ignoring* you, I’ve been... busy, and-”

“Bullshit.”

She starts. “Excuse me?”

“That’s bullshit, Alina, don’t play dumb. You’ve been ignoring me for weeks with no explanation.”

“Sasha-” she cuts herself off, sighs, all the fight going out of her. She’s so *tired*.

“Do you want to sit down?” She gestures to the sofa.

Aleksander settles in with Paul Rudd purring like a lawnmower on his lap while Alina sets the kettle on and pulls a couple of mugs from the cabinet. The dying light of the day falls across the back of the sofa; the contrast casts his dark hair in stark relief, arresting as a Caravaggio.

“About a year ago, I asked my boyfriend to move in with me,” she says. There’s no use in making something up or beating around the bush, not if she wants-

She’s not sure what she wants. But she knows she doesn’t want to lie.

“It didn’t go well. He said he didn’t want to, and then he said that he wanted to break up,” she continues, dropping a tea bag in each mug, “and as he was breaking up with me, he told me I was clingy and annoying and didn’t have a personality, and that he didn’t like being around me.”

Aleksander is silent in the living room. He looks at her mildly, running a hand along Paul’s back.

“And a few weeks ago, I was out to drinks with Nikolai and Zoya, and Nikolai opened his big fat mouth-”

“As Nikolai is wont to do,” Aleksander says, and she smiles.

“As he is wont to do,” she nods, “and made a stupid joke about... about me and you moving in together.” She sighs.

“And I know it was just a joke, and I know he’s an idiot, but- I don’t know. I freaked out a little bit. It doesn’t have anything to do with you. Promise.” The kettle starts to shriek on the stove.

“So...” he trails off.

“So, ” she says, turning the stove off. A cloud of steam billows in front of her face as she fills their mugs. “I don’t think it’s such a good idea if we keep- seeing each other.” She doesn’t know if that’s exactly what she’d call it, but it’s close enough.

“Why is that?”

“I just- I think I’m too romantic. I get caught up in things too easily. I’m too- I’m too needy.”

He opens his mouth, and she rushes to cut him off, hands flinging wide as she gestures nervously. “I’m not saying it’s a bad thing, honestly. I just- I know myself, and I think I’m too emotional, and probably, yeah, too needy to do a friends with benefits thing.”

Aleksander removes the cat from his lap, ignoring Paul’s huffy little *mrow* of irritation, stands, and circles her countertop, looking at her and *looking* at her, and he doesn’t say anything. It makes her want to scream, she wants to crack his head open like an egg to see what the hell is going on in there, why he’s always *looking* at her like that.

He comes to stand in front of her, so close she can feel his breath on her face. He still doesn’t say anything, and her heart starts pounding.

It’s too silent, she can’t stand it. “I just think-” she licks her lips, “that I’m probably going to... develop... feelings.” Her words come out so breathy she’s almost embarrassed, but the slant of his eyes is too dark, too distracting for her to dwell on the ridiculousness of the idea that she hasn’t developed feelings already.

His hand comes up to catch her face, thumb resting on the point of her chin.

“*Malyshka*,” he says. His voice is so soft.

She doesn’t dare say anything.

“Whatever gave you the impression that you developing feelings is not exactly what I want?”

Her belly swoops.

“Maybe,” he says, holding her face in both hands now, “I like you needy and emotional.”

She shivers and closes her eyes, turns her face into the curve of his palm.

“Has it ever occurred to you to let someone else take care of you for once?” he asks, and she can feel tears pricking behind her eyes.

“Sasha...”

“Alina,” he says, “open your eyes, darling.” She does, and he’s still looking.

“Hello.”

“Hello,” she croaks with a dry mouth.

“Let me take you to bed,” he presses a kiss to one cheek, “and then let me take you to dinner,” and a kiss to the other. She blinks slowly at him and sighs.

“I think... that would be nice.”

Alexander hums and nods and breathes in the scent of her at her neck. Maybe he finds the smell of her skin as strange and nostalgic as she does his. Maybe he, too, wants to take in every particle of her through every orifice of his, to consume her and be consumed at the same time. Maybe he just likes the smell of her shampoo. She finds she doesn't care.

It doesn't really matter, not right now, not when he's backing her into the bedroom slowly, carefully feline, predatory. What matters is the slick slide of his mouth on hers, the choke of his hand on her wrist.

For once, she gets him out of his clothes first, wants the smooth, too-sensitive press of skin on skin before she wants anything else. At her urging, he undresses himself and then her and looks at her very softly when she sighs with content, her hands braced on the sharp planes of his cheekbones.

He splays her out across her bed and traces the lines of her body with his hands and mouth, and this time, Alina doesn't fight down the pushy swell of emotion. She lets it rise from her belly to her throat, and it doesn't choke her like she thought it would.

Instead it comes out like a hum, like a song: some melody she'd almost forgotten.

She lets him consume her without trepidation, and if she trembles it's only because he's so skilled with his tongue, knows her body so well and is so very generous about it.

Part of her wants to be quiet, to be so soft and pliant and loose in his arms that she doesn't even make a sound when he pushes into her, thick and heavy and hot. Aleksander makes sure that doesn't happen.

He works for her gasping noises, the rough, guttered way her breath leaves her with each thrust.

He uses his mouth, hot and slick on the soft swell of her breast, to pull a litany of high, desperate whimpers from her throat.

He draws out of her a *Sasha, Sasha, Sasha* with his clever hands, circling her clit and running a finger along the place where they're joined, along the wet, swollen heat of her cunt. She almost blacks out when he gently works his middle finger in alongside his cock. The stretch is unbearable; she thinks she'll split apart with it, but *God*, she comes harder than she has since that time he made her-

Just the memory of it sends a blush down her chest as she rocks back and forth on his cock and finger.

Aleksander is as mouthy as ever, praising her every movement as if she's some prodigy, a miracle sent to awe and astonish him. He tells her she's *so damn sweet it isn't right*, that she's *fucking perfect, Alina, do you hear me? Perfect*. He tells her she's *made for me. Just for me. Sweet and perfect and mine*.

The grip of her thighs around his hips is bruising as she ruts up against him, arms wrapped around his shoulders so she can stay as close as possible. Each thrust inside drags her tits along his chest, the stimulation against her nipples lighting up like electricity.

She can feel his cock starting to pull another orgasm from her belly, pulls back so she can kiss him, and whispers against his open, gasping mouth, "so good, Sasha, you fuck me so good. Nobody ever did this to me. It's just you, just you. Just want you."

He makes a pained, grating sound and bites at her lips and it hurts so nicely as he comes inside her with a groan. His hips jerk against her a few times as she clenches down on his cock as it twitches deliciously in her cunt.

Pulling away from her with a contented sigh, he sits back on his haunches without pulling out and lazily brings a hand to her clit, rolling it beneath his fingers. He winces a little bit as she grinds down on him, and she knows he must be sensitive, but she's still so full and it feels so good and he's just letting her, talking her through another climax with a smug, sated look on his face.

“Come on, malyshka, one more time for daddy,” he says, and she falls over the edge, throbbing around his waning erection with a weak little cry.

He pulls out on a sigh, arranges her on her side so she’s facing him, and tucks her head under his chin. It fits there so nicely. All the angles and curves of their bodies nestle right into each other with ease. *Like Lincoln logs*, she thinks sleepily.

She’s almost out when Aleksander clears his throat, the noise conspicuous and rumibly next to her ear.

“Nikolai...” Sasha says darkly, running his hand up and down her spine.

“Oh, don’t start.”

“I didn’t say anything,” he laughs, his breath puffing warm across her skin, but after a beat, he says, “Do you want me to kick his ass for you?”

Alina laughs and laughs and laughs until there are tears on her cheeks and on Aleksander’s neck.

“No, I don’t think so. He’s very delicate. You’d probably do some permanent damage.”

He huffs softly. The hair on the crown of her head ruffles.

She continues, “besides, then you’d have Zoya to deal with, and I don’t even think I’d be able to protect you from her.”

Aleksander shudders.

“I thought so.”

your hair, in deep devotion

Chapter Summary

how aleksander saw it

Chapter Notes

this is the mushiest shit i ever wrote in my life. thankfully i can assure you it will never happen again

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He almost doesn't go.

It's a Friday night, and he's only just leaving the office at 8:30 when he remembers Nikolai's invitation. He waffles for a few minutes, sucking on his teeth as he locks his office, and groans, remembering the way Nikolai had pressed him, wouldn't take no for an answer.

On the way over he stops at a liquor store, gets the first bottle of red wine he sees for over \$100. Maybe if he stops in and drops off some uselessly pricey alcohol, they won't notice when he dips after 20 minutes.

Of course, he formulates this plan before he has to take into account the cute little thing nestled into the corner of the couch when he gets there. She notices him as he notices her, and conspicuously makes her way over closer to the front door, hovers by the kitchen counter turning a corkscrew over and over in her hands in a useless motion.

He can't stop noticing her, even as he gets dragged into a conversation with Nikolai and his friend David, who Aleksander feels he's met before somewhere. When the girl shoots a coy little glance at him over her shoulder, he's too distracted to try and figure it out, and manages to pry himself away from whatever it is Nikolai's chatting about without too much effort. Nikolai, Aleksander has found, is extremely adept at entertaining himself when the need arises.

“Aleksander,” he introduces himself when she turns to look at him head on.

“Alina,” she says quietly. *Alina*. He turns the syllables over in his head.

They stand and look at each other for a heavy, humid moment before Alina- *Alina*, he thinks- inhales sharply and asks him how he knows Nikolai.

He tells her that he works at the hospital and pours her a glass of his very expensive red wine. She looks like she needs someone to spend a little money on her.

They make small talk, she teases him about his job, eyes lighting up when he mentions horseback riding. He tries desperately to keep his mind on the conversation when he can’t stop looking at her mouth, tinged the barest shade of purple with wine.

Just when his control is about to break, and he thinks he’s going to have to drag her into a dark corner and get his hands on her or possibly *die*, she sets her glass down, eyes him meaningfully, and says: “I’m going to the ladies’ room. It’s just down the hall and to the right. I shouldn’t be long.”

With another lingering glance, she walks away, and Aleksander’s left trying to regain his composure over a simple conversation. He waits as long as he can, seconds ticking by like centuries, drags himself through the agony of talking to Nikolai and David when there’s only one thing he wants to be doing right now.

After what he feels is probably less than an appropriate amount of time, he excuses himself and follows Alina’s path down the hall and into the bathroom. The metal handle of the door is cool and bracing in his hand. He takes a minute, closes his eyes, deep breath in, tries to steady himself.

When he opens the door, she’s standing there with a tight, worried look on her face, and a thought floats through the back of his brain: that he doesn’t like that look on her, and would

like to ensure that she never looks like that again. He tries to explain getting held up by Nikolai, but she barely gives him two seconds before launching herself at his face, and then-

Then he's very distracted, indeed.

Her mouth is hot and wet beneath his, her body squirming against him, and he wraps her in his arms to try and stabilize her. She's a humming ball of energy beneath his hands. He wants to kiss her senseless.

The slide of her hair in between his fingers feels like silk; she lets his tongue into her mouth with a sweet sigh, and he wants to hear it over and over and over again, thinks he could be content just kissing her for a year.

It's like she can hear what he's thinking. She pants out against his mouth, "I'm not really looking for anything serious right now."

He keeps kissing her, because what else can he do, but his stomach goes a little cold.

"Sure," he says, "that's alright."

He won't let it bother him. He *doesn't* let it bother him.

He doesn't let it bother him so much that he drops to his knees and buries his face in her cunt, licks her until she's whimpering and coming around his fingers, sucks on her clit until she can't take it anymore. He calls himself her daddy, and when she stutters out a helpless gasp, his stomach turns, warm and pleasant, and he knows he's probably done something unforgivable tonight.

He tells her how sweet she is for him, he kisses her neck and holds her cute little tits in his hands, trying to ignore how strangely familiar it all feels. The smell of her skin is like déjà vu: whiplash, disconcerting.

It's so bad he can't even protest when she begs him to fuck her raw. She's so sweet, kissing along his jaw, like she's asking for a pony: "please daddy, I want you to fill me up," and what is he supposed to do?

What is he supposed to do when she looks like that, flushed and bare and wiggling on the counter, big eyes all watery, like the thought of him bare inside her is worth her tears?

A better man would say no, he tells himself. A better man would pluck the condom from her hand and use it, wouldn't let her do something she'll regret later. But Aleksander's never really thought of himself as a particularly good man.

So he lines his naked cock up with her pink, weeping cunt, pushes in as she whispers "oh, daddy," in his ear, and counts backward from fifty to keep himself from shooting off inside her right then. She feels exactly like he knew she would: soft, wet, tight.

"Sweet little cunt, sweet little baby," he says in her ear as he rocks in, her wrists gripped together in one of his hands. She's so small. She feels breakable.

Maybe she is; he can see it happening in front of him when she starts to go down. Her eyelids flutter shut, her body limp in his arms. She coos out little, satisfied sounds with every thrust, and he tells her exactly how sweet she is.

"You're so good, Alina, so soft. Fit my cock perfectly, like your tight little cunt was made for me." She sighs and shifts on him, wiggling her hips to get him deeper.

She's a sweet, squirming, perfect little thing, delicate in his arms, and when she lets him come inside her, she kisses him like she's been waiting for it her whole life, like all she needs to feel complete is his mouth opening hers up, patient and thorough.

They exchange phone numbers before he leaves the party, but Aleksander can't help but think he's given a little more of himself away than he meant to.

Her apartment is small, with a tiny kitchen and no dining room to speak of, but her walls are lined with art and framed photographs of Alina and her friends; the old couch is comfortable-looking and littered with well-loved throw blankets. There's a candle burning on the windowsill and soft pop music playing on the tv. The colors are rich and vibrant: mossy greens and fireburnt oranges on the clear, saltwater blue of her walls.

"I'm not technically allowed to paint the walls, but I know a bunch of other people in the building have, and I figure I'll prime them back before I move out, so..."

She seems almost embarrassed, and he abruptly wants to reassure her, to make sure she knows that her little apartment is warm and friendly and feels like *her*; which, to Aleksander—there's nothing better.

After that, she doesn't invite him back to her place, and while they both agree the sex is better without a cat bellowing on the other side of the bedroom door, he can't help but notice the settled, lived-in feeling that his apartment doesn't have.

He allows himself to wonder, briefly, as he looks at her purse thrown comfortably across the back of his couch, how much more like home it would feel if she lived there, too.

That thought is quickly brushed aside, however, as Alina unceremoniously strips out of her jeans right in the middle of his living room.

He pins her down to his bed by the throat, fucks the breath out of her, kisses her neck, comes inside her with a groan. She calls him *daddy* and gives him her sweetest sounds, her softest looks.

When she goes home, she slings her coat over her shoulder, gives him a pink-cheeked grin, says *thanks*, and leaves before supper. Aleksander pours himself a glass of wine while he watches pasta boil, thinks about the blankets in her living room, pours himself another glass

and thinks about her purse on his couch, and pours himself another glass and hopes that he stops thinking soon.

The first time Aleksander wakes up alone after Alina's gone home the night before, his apartment feels too cold. His nose is cool to the touch and his toes feel like they're carved from marble, frigid and heavy. He sits up in bed, still half-wrapped in down comforter, and arches his back in an attempt to shed the aching stiffness coiled around his spine, when his gaze catches on a light blue something peeking out from underneath his dresser.

He stands and picks it up and realizes that it's a pair of Alina's soft cotton underwear, edged with a miniscule line of lace trim.

His face softens with a tired smile as he remembers the way he made her come before he'd even got the little scrap of blue off her body yet, hands on her hips, rocking her back and forth against the firm line of his thigh until she shuddered and fell apart in his arms with a sweet little whimper.

The top drawer of his dresser makes a soft clicking noise as he shuts it with the panties tucked away inside.

On a Thursday, Aleksander runs into Nikolai in the hospital parking garage, Nikolai coming in for a night shift as Aleksander leaves for the day. Aleksander lifts a hand to wave as he unlocks his car, and Nikolai barrels past him toward the elevator, then stops and skids on a turn, beaming at Aleksander.

"Morozova!" Nikolai says around a mouthful of something, "haven't seen you in ages. I've got to run, but- how are you? How are things going with Alina?"

“Good, things are good, she’s...” he trails off, trying to find the right words, the right balance. He can’t say how he really feels, can’t let the intensity of his emotions show like that. Alina’s made it very clear what she wants from him, and it’s not the same as what he wants from her. He can’t say all that to her best friend.

“I like her.” *Too much*, he thinks. “But you go on, go save some kindergartner's life.”

Nikolai looks at him, just this side of too sharp, too clever. “Take care of my girl, Morozova. She’s a good one.”

Aleksander nods and watches as Nikolai kicks one foot up to punch at the elevator door button, almost falling over in an attempt to balance his bag on one arm and an extra large coffee and deli sandwich in the other hand.

His hand rests on the gentle crest of her lower belly as he eats her out, and he can’t help but think-

Maybe she’d stay.

He tries not to think about it as he works his cock inside her slick cunt, tries not to think about how pretty she’d look, her soft tits heavy with milk and her belly heavy with his baby.

He sternly tells himself not to get off to the idea of fucking her full of his seed, knocking her up so that everyone can see how well she’s taken care of. When he comes inside her, he screws his hips deep and closes his eyes and tries to ignore the image of coming home to her every day. In his mind, he doesn’t look at her round stomach, doesn’t listen to her bare feet padding softly across the floor to greet him with a kiss, doesn’t see how warm and vibrant and alive his apartment looks with her living in it.

The warm fist of her cunt clenches around his cock and brings him back to the present. She sighs out a breathy *daddy*, and it's almost too much.

When he pulls out of her, he can't help but spread the lips of her cunt with his thumbs, watch as his come leaks out of her, dripping down the flushed curl of her entrance, and he can't help but trace her hole with his fingers, can't help but push his seed back inside her, work it into her little cunt like it might take, like maybe this time will be the time she lets him put his baby inside her.

Alina doesn't help, moaning under him like she can hear what he's thinking, like she wants that, too. His chest feels hollow. He lowers his mouth to her pussy and licks her clean, makes her come twice more on his tongue before he can think clearly.

"A friend of mine is getting married this weekend," Aleksander tells her, his heart racing. He knows it's not exactly platonic, to invite your casual, non-romantic hookup to go to your close friend's wedding with you.

"Good for them," she says absently. The sound of keys jingling filters through the phone.

"Are you busy?"

"Huh?"

"Are you busy? Would you want to come with me? I forgot about it until today and I'm down a plus one." He closes his eyes against the inevitable rejection and bolsters himself.

"Oh, I don't know, Sasha. I won't know anyone there and-"

"No, this is good, I want to introduce you to them. Nina and Fedyor and Ivan and everyone," he interrupts, feeling desperate. Maybe if she meets everyone, sees how well their lives could merge together, maybe she'll start to realize.

A long silence.

"Just friends?"

He grimaces.

"Just friends. I promise. There'll be an open bar."

It's been almost six months since they started sleeping together and she hasn't fallen hopelessly in love yet; maybe this will be the night that tips her over. He crosses his fingers, feeling like a child.

Another long silence.

"Fine. Since there's an open bar."

He breaks into a grin.

Part of him feels like he's getting away with something, like he's pulling off some sort of heist and Alina is both victim and accomplice.

He pulls up to her apartment and when he gets out to open the car door for her, he feels like he's been punched in the gut. He knew she would look good, she always looks good, but he

had no idea seeing her all done up like this would give him such a physical reaction. Her hair is pulled away from her face, little wisps framing her jaw like a halo, and she's draped in gold, a shining, satiny vision.

It takes all his restraint not to drag her back upstairs into her bed and send the Uber driver with the nice Le Creuset dutch oven he bought Nina and Matthias and a "sorry, got distracted by how hot my date looks" note.

Not a date, he reminds himself. But then Alina smiles at him, flushed and pretty, and he lets himself pretend for just a moment. Lets himself imagine that she's his, that they're arriving from his place because she lives there too, that this is a date, that they're a couple, and everyone knows they'll be arriving together, because that's what couples do.

It only gets worse when she gets along so well with Fedyor and Jesper, who's ditched whatever groomsman duties he may have to get champagne drunk and gossip with the rest of them. She even lets Aleksander drag her onto the dance floor after a few drinks, loose and pink and smiling. He could stay in this daydream forever.

And he notices, of course he notices, when she starts getting needy and handsy, trying to cop a feel while they're still at the reception. He corrals her enough to get her in the car before she starts sucking on his neck, but once she's there it's like something inside her is on fire.

She straddles his lap and grinds her hot cunt against his leg, grabs his hand and tries to stick it up underneath her skirt and inside her, whines when he pulls away, like it's outrageous that he doesn't want to finger her in the back of this Uber in front of God and everyone.

The driver doesn't say anything, and Aleksander doesn't know whether to be grateful or pissed off about it.

"Please, Sasha," she begs him, and he laughs at her.

"You can wait until we get inside, I think, sweetheart," he says, and tries not to respond in kind when she shudders against him, pushing her hips against where his cock is swelling in his pants.

“Not when you talk to me like that, I can’t,” she pouts, and puts her face in the crook of his neck. He can feel her inhale. He’s never wanted anyone so badly.

If they can just get to the elevator, he thinks, then he can give her what she needs, get his hands on her desperate little body, but just as he’s leaning into Alina to kiss the sense out of her, a wrinkled, liver-spotted hand tipped with long, red nails seizes the edge of the door with a truly shocking amount of grip strength.

For a brief, horrifying moment, Aleksander thinks it’s his mother. Then the woman enters, giving them both a dismissive glance, and his blood pressure drops back down to a normal range again.

The elevator ride up is excruciating. Aleksander can practically feel Alina vibrating with want next to him, hands primly pressed to her hips.

He gets her naked the second she’s in his bedroom, kissing each inch of skin as it’s revealed.

She lets out little whimpers that go straight from his ears to his groin, a sharp *zing* of undiluted lust coursing through him at the idea that she, sweet thing that she is, wants him so badly she can’t hold it in.

It’s like a drug, he can’t hold himself back; he lets his hands wander over the valley of her waist, the dimples above her ass, circles each breast in his hands and squeezes, just to hear her respond with those curling little sounds, high and desperate in the back of her throat.

Her face is completely soft and open when he pushes her to the bed, not an ounce of resistance left in her body. “Good girl, Alina. So sweet for me, so obedient,” he tells her, clocking with a heightened awareness the way her lids drop and her head sways to the side just a breath, as if it’s gotten slightly heavier in the past instant.

She lays back just as easily, his hand on her sternum, and just sighs to herself when he pulls her panties off and arranges her legs over his shoulders, settling in the cradle of her thighs to

seal his mouth to her sex.

The lush, hot feel of her cunt on his mouth, the slick slide of her clit under his tongue, the inexorable press of her walls around his fingers: it's nothing compared to the jolt of his heart when she reaches down to hold his hand. He grips it tight, runs his thumb across the back of her hand in a gentle sweep.

Could he just keep her like this? Sweet and soft and keening under him, all tangled up with nowhere to be? Maybe if he makes her come hard enough, if he gives it to her deep enough, if he kisses her soft enough, she'll hear what he's trying to say.

She grinds down on his face, interrupting the frankly embarrassing direction his mind was taking him, and he pulls off to tell her how good she is, how well she's doing for daddy, how bad he wants to see her come for him.

And then she- God, it's like she keeps a diary on him, jots down every reaction he has, noting what exactly is going to drive him so insane he might explode- she pulls his hand to her mouth, wraps her kiss-swollen lips around his fingers, eyelids fluttering like she's just taken a hit of her most illicit craving.

His breath catches and jumps in his throat. A stuttering, guttering gasp chokes out of him unbidden.

Cards on the table, he's too overwhelmed, he has to tell her what she is to him: "My beautiful girl... I can't fucking stand it sometimes, you're too-"

Too near, too far, too ephemeral, too substantial, too close to being his for him to maintain this nonsensical status quo. Does she not see it? Does she not feel how warm he gets for her? They can't go on like this, he decides in that moment, he's had enough of these games.

He leans up over her, drives into her with his fingers, determined, like he can fuck some sense into her and make her listen to him this way.

Maybe he knows, deep down, that he's trying to orchestrate some unprecedented event here, so that the shock of it will wake her up: a cold glass of water to the face in the early morning. She clenches down on him like a vise and sobs around his fingers, winding her hips down to grind on his other hand.

Either way, he can feel her hurtling towards the edge. He knows her body well enough by now- maybe always has- to accurately read the tight fluttering of her cunt, the staccato tremble in her chin, the look of shock and anticipation and something that flirts with fear on her face. She's close.

"That's it, just like that. Give it to daddy, baby, give daddy your come. So good for me, always so-" he cuts himself off when she clenches with a squeal and comes, writhing, on his fingers. His satisfaction is arrested by a quick blurt of surprise that immediately gives way to a rush of uncontrolled arousal as she squirts all over his hand.

"Jesus fuck," he whispers, voice cut through with tangible awe. She tries to push him away with a little cry, but he keeps working at her, confident he can pull another one out, desire nearing desperation to see it again.

"Sasha, I can't-" she says

"Yes, you can, sweetheart, I know you can do it. One more for me. Just like that, yes, don't you want to be good for daddy?"

She whimpers and reaches for him, and how can he *live* like this? His sweet girl asking for him, so needy for something as simple as the press of his body on hers- how can she think this is anything less than everything to him?

"*Please*, daddy, please, please," she begs him, pinned underneath his chest, and it's all he can do to keep from pulling his fingers out and fucking his cock into her right then, but he keeps going, rolling her swollen clit under his thumb and kissing her cheek when she jumps, oversensitive.

A shiver runs through her, and she goes quiet, eyes soft and hazy the way they get sometimes. She slips down somewhere. It's hard to reach her while she's there, but he's happy to carry her until she's ready to come back. He kisses her, deep, carving out a space in her mouth with his tongue, and turns his face into the curve of her neck, mouths at her throat, talks to her quietly.

“My sweet girl, always so good for me. Want to keep you like this all the time, just want to come home to my baby in my bed every day. You have no idea how badly I want you, you make me such a fool. I hate the days I don't get to see you, I resent them for not giving me what I want. Every call that comes through that's not from you is pointless. I think about you all day, spend hours just waiting to touch you. You're *mine*, Alina, do you hear me? You're mine.”

She comes again, a weak cry falling out of her mouth, giving him another rush of wetness to coat his fingers. Her mouth is slack and slick with spit- his and hers- and she seems very far away, eyes unfocused. He doesn't think she heard him, not really, not to understand. It's just as well, he thinks, probably too much. Probably too intense; he usually is.

He kisses her face, the corner of her jaw, the round apple of her cheek, the tears steadily leaking from her eyes. He kisses her mouth, whispers her own name against her lips.

He's more turned on than he's ever been in his life, but she's completely limp and worn out in his arms, doesn't make a peep when he maneuvers her limbs around him, lays her out on top of him so he can get as much skin to skin contact as possible. It's enough, for tonight, just to be able to touch her.

The room is cool, but her skin is overheated when he runs his hands along her back and waist and hip. Her forehead is flushed and damp with sweat under his mouth. She breathes, shallow and quick, then deeper, farther into her chest, ribcage expanding and contracting beneath his hand.

A few long minutes pass, and he wishes he could catch hold of them, stretch them out like saltwater taffy, so they last forever, so he can remain in the thin, transparent space here forever, with her cradled in his arms, just breathing.

For now, she's fuzzy enough for him to slide out of his clothes without alerting her; she just jostles a little, eyes closed, as he slips out of his suit and discards it in a pile on the floor.

When he lays back down fully, she sighs, turns her face into his chest, pulls her hand in and curls it between them. He lets her settle there and hopes she stays for a while.

Lights flicker in the skyline outside his bedroom window. Alina pulls in a wet breath and shivers in his arms. He chafes a hand up and down her back and tugs her closer, presses his mouth to her forehead: not a kiss, not really, just pushing, just pressure.

It hasn't been long enough for him when she blinks back into her body, and he watches with amusement as she remembers what he got her to do.

"You've never done that before?" He asks her, and when she shakes her head, he has to close his eyes to tamp down on the visceral rush of possessiveness that catapults through his body. The clench of his jaw ticks almost painfully. He swallows.

No one's ever done that to her, never been able to make her come like that, no one's ever known her body like this. And if he has anything to say about it, no one else ever will. He sits up next to her and she pushes her pink face into his neck. He skates a hand up and down her spine.

She touches his face and turns hers up to him, practically begging to be kissed on her pert little mouth. He obliges.

For her? Always.

"Sasha..." she tells him, and puts her hand in his underwear, grasps him where he's still aching for her, strokes her hand up and down the length of him.

He catches her wrist. "You should rest, *malyshka*." Baby. Baby baby baby baby baby. His baby.

“Don’t want to rest, want you to fuck me,” she says with a petulant little whine. He groans into her throat as she starts to clamber on top of him, hands at his shoulders.

He tries to tell her she needs to just sleep, that she worked herself up into something of a frenzy, let him wear her out like a good girl, but she’s so squirmy and desperate on top of him, wriggling in his lap like she’ll die if she doesn’t get him inside her, and how could he deprive her of this?

If this is what his baby wants, it’s what she’ll get.

She sighs as he presses into her, and he can’t breathe for a moment. He worked her over so well, how can she be this tight? The grip of her soft, wet little cunt around his cock is a heavy-handed metaphor, almost scolding: *see what you’ve gotten yourself into? Too tight, you won’t get out now. You’re in far too deep.*

He thinks about a party favor from some childhood Halloween party, a Chinese finger trap. Easy in, no out.

Shakes himself internally, looks into her pretty face, the shining dark of her eyes. Her brows draw together, her mouth drops open, agony, ecstasy.

He fills her all the way up, as deep as she’ll let him in. His mind runs ahead, sprinting through a litany of *yes mine always mine her forever mine Alina mine.*

Surely she can feel it. Surely the inevitability of this, the weight of his cock inside her, the aching press of his heart against his ribs is mirrored inside her. Surely this feeling isn’t escaping her. This can’t be a solo act.

She sinks all the way down, fully seated in his lap like a perfect little doll, and they’re lined up from nose to navel. He’s noticed she seems to like it this way best, favors greater skin contact to easier angles.

He can't say he blames her.

They just sit for a moment, each savoring the feeling of fullness, completeness. Just getting to rest inside her is a finish all its own. They stare, foreheads pressed together, dark eyes reflected back at each other.

But then he feels her pulse a little, cunt eager to be used, and he pulls her down, grinding into her, and she lets out a chest-deep, guttural sound, punched out like it was pressurized and waiting to break inside her.

He puts his hands on her hips and rocks her back and forth, rutting up into her to catch along that spot she likes so much.

"Sasha," she sighs, and he knows she can feel it, too.

"I know, sweetheart."

She turns into him, her face pressed against his neck, and breathes in deeply. He puts his hand on the back of her head where it's laying on the flat plane of his shoulder and scratches at her scalp, threads just the tips of his fingers in her hair.

It's a slow grind, achingly intimate, rubbing up against a sore spot deep inside his chest. He wraps his arms around her and rocks against her, listens to the small noises she makes, trying to memorize the shape of each one.

The slick throb of her cunt around him pulls him down. He can't breathe, she takes up too much space inside his lungs, he'd gladly drown in her given half a chance, and thank her for the opportunity.

Fluid, she rolls her hips forward, her breath starting to pick up, panting into his neck damply. It's only a moment later she gasps and comes around him, shuddering in his arms. She goes completely limp as he fucks up into her, chasing orgasm, wants so badly to paint her insides with his come, mark her up with something lasting.

His teeth find bruising purchase in his lower lip as he bites down to keep from saying something very damning when he comes inside her, hot and cold and rushing and deep. He rides it out, fucking up into the soft give of her body, pushing breathy little noises out of her with each thrust.

After, he reclines against the headboard, sighing with content when she comes with him, draped across his chest; he can't tell if she's asleep or not, but it doesn't matter, not if he just gets to hold her for a while.

The weight of her on top of him should be smothering; it should be too hot and too sticky and uncomfortable and he should want to get out from under her as soon as possible.

It should.

Later, after she's come back to herself, he attempts to recover some lost ground as he snaps the corners of the clean sheet on the bed, rolling the past hour over and over in his head. He swallows down roiling anticipation of a boundaries conversation, sure she's going to come out the bathroom and tell him she doesn't want anything serious and that he needs to back off.

But she doesn't. She just grabs the last corner and tucks it under the mattress, fishes her phone out from under one of his pillows, and makes a quiet, irritated noise.

"What?" He asks, reaching out with a glass of water.

"Nothing. I'm going to have a hell of a time finding an Uber this late," she takes the water and drinks half of it, sets it down on the nightstand and reaches for where he must have tossed her panties earlier.

The mantle clock on his dresser says 2:08, and he scoffs internally at the idea of sending her out anywhere this late. He loops an arm around her waist and pulls her down

She grumbles about his cold nose, but settles into the warmth of his arms too easily for him to buy it. He fakes a snore, hoping she'll take the hint, and when she pulls the duvet over her shoulder and wiggles farther back into him he struggles not to press his smile into her back.

At some point in the middle of the night, she wakes him up with a loud snuffling noise. She's rolled over to face him, her head tucked underneath his chin and her face pressed against his throat. Her hands are drawn up between them, curled into her chest, and she looks a little like a cartoon T-rex.

He wraps his arm around her, strokes his hand up and down her spine, and presses a kiss to the crown of her head, breathes in the smell of her. The room is quiet as the air conditioning kicks on, that weird HVAC thump and a click and then the soft hum of air in the vents.

Her skin is smooth and cool to the touch. Aleksander slows his mind, counts every sensation as they come to him: clean coconut scent of her shampoo, nasal whistle of her breath, every inch of her pressed up against him, hips, thighs, chest, arms. From this close, he can just barely make out the side of her face. Eyes soft, mouth relaxed in sleep. She looks younger like this.

When he pulls back a little to get a better look at her, her brows draw together and she makes a short, glottal noise of protest back in her throat. The corners of her mouth tip just barely downward. He settles back down, lets her bury her face in his chest.

A laugh catches in his throat and he pushes it down, loathe to wake her up and break the fragile, spider's-web thread of this moment.

Try as he might to stay awake and take in every second of the brief hours he gets to have her like this, the rhythmic in-out of her breath fills his brain with a cloud of cotton, and he's out like a light in a few minutes.

He wakes up to an empty bed, and his heart drops a little before he hears the faucet going in the bathroom.

It cuts off as he approaches, and through the cracked door, he catches her hands tucking away the long rope of her hair into a neat little bun. He leans against the doorjamb and takes her in with a sleep-rumpled look. She looks back at him in the mirror. Her face is still lined with pillow creases. He wants to rub his thumb across them, smooth the skin out with his fingers.

He keeps his hand at his side and taps against the door frame. "I'm going to shower and make breakfast, if you're hungry."

Alina tries to protest but is interrupted by an unrepentant howl from her stomach. Aleksander just smiles and turns the shower on, stripping out of his boxers and leaving the door open behind him. She only waits a second before following him in.

He cradles her face in his hands and greets her with a kiss, one she leans into on a sigh, her fingers skating up the length of his arms. His hands find their way to her hips, pull her body against his, slick with the water sluicing down his chest and her belly, rivulets between them pressed to nothing.

Under the water, her skin looks like an oil painting: gleaming and distorted and a vivid bronze in the flat, black whiteness of his shower. He turns her and kisses a line down the flat of one shoulder.

She lets him wash her hair, working the birch and vetiver scent of his shampoo into her scalp. It's easy to lose himself in the simple domesticity of it, to pretend that he's doing this before they go to the Sunday farmer's market together, where they'll hold hands and he'll buy everything she looks at for longer than a few seconds. Where she kisses him in public without needing a drink, and touches his face without avoiding eye contact.

He pretends that when he rinses the conditioner out of her hair, they'll get out of the shower and he'll dress while she blows most of it dry before muttering *fuck it* under her breath and

braiding it into pigtails. He pretends that she'll go into his closet and come out with one of those little strappy sundresses she wears sometimes, the cotton ones that button down the front and have little flowers printed on them.

And while she dresses, he'll go out to the kitchen and make them a couple of grilled cheese sandwiches, hers with pepperjack cheese instead of cheddar, and she'll say *thank you, baby* with a smile and kiss his mouth.

He pretends that later this week, they'll go see a movie with Zoya and Nikolai, and they'll get kicked out of the theater because Zoya and Nikolai wouldn't stop making out and someone yelled for an usher. He pretends that she'll kiss him in front of her friends, that she'll let him pay for her food, that she'll refer to him as her partner, or her boyfriend, or her whatever. That she'll refer to him as hers.

It's easy to forget, digging his fingers into the tense line of muscle at the base of her neck, her face pressed into his chest. It's easy to forget that he isn't hers, that she's not his. He takes a moment to silently thank her for letting him have this, these in-between moments where she's kind enough to refrain from reminding him of who they are to each other.

For now, the shower is warm and her wet hair is wrapped around his fingers, and he thanks her again for slowing down enough for him to gently detangle each knot with a dull, aching care.

All of a sudden, he stops hearing from her. She won't answer his texts, doesn't pick up when he calls.

The last time she came over, she looked so tired he almost just put her to bed right then, had to stop himself from undressing her and tucking her under the sheets without asking. Her eyes were ringed blue-gray, sunken, and she was a little pale, but she'd barely let him get a few words in before she was on him, kissing him like she'd been thinking about it all day.

She dragged him into bed, but he only got to make her come once with his mouth before she passed out, face turning into his pillow with her hand still in his hair.

He'd fallen asleep wrapped around her like a limpet, chin hooked over her shoulder, listening to the soft, even *whoosh-whoosh* of her breath.

In the morning, she was gone, but she'd left a little note on his bedside table, sharpie on a paper towel, her clear, blocky handwriting: *sorry I can't hang :(I have a work meeting I forgot about but I'll call you later :) thank u :)*

He smiles, snorts a laugh to himself, tucks the paper towel away in the top drawer of his dresser, thinks about calling her all day, but doesn't hear from her, reminds himself that she said she'd call, and if she doesn't, then he doesn't need to go banging on her front door. She's an adult, she has her own life, and if she wants to hear from him, she'll let him know.

The next day he sends her a text at lunch, asking if she wants to come over, but doesn't get a response. She's busy, though, he knows. Her work is understaffed and overbooked, and sometimes she does twelve hour days without a break, so he understands.

He texts her again after he gets home, sometime after seven, stew simmering on the stovetop. Saffron and cumin fill the too-tall space of his kitchen: warm spices, rich and bright and full of depth. The marble of his countertops looks pale and void after staring into the clay-red broth inside the pot.

Another day goes by without anything. He sends another text, concerned, just asking if everything's all right, and she doesn't respond. A few hours later, he calls, and the phone rings, and rings, and rings, and *Hi, you've reached Alina. Sorry I missed you, probably easier if you just text me!*

A week goes by in a similar fashion. He sends a text on Wednesday, calls at lunch, and doesn't hear from her.

Hi, you've reached Alina. Sorry I missed you, probably easier if you just text me!

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Hi, you've reached Alina. Sorry I missed you, probably easier if you just text me!

On the sixth day, he seeks out Nikolai in the Pediatrics wing on the ninth floor. He asks if everything's okay with her, says he hasn't heard from her in days, just wants to make sure she's all right.

Nikolai goes a little red and tells him, sympathetic but tight-lipped, that she's fine and she's probably just worn out from work. Something about a co-worker walking out abruptly and doubling her caseload.

Two weeks, then three weeks. He stops texting, stops calling. If she wanted to hear from him, she'd reach out, he reasons. She's an adult, she's smart, she's-

But he *misses* her. He misses talking to her, he misses the sing-songy cadence of her voice, the funny, fond way she describes her friends, the way she tells him Paul Rudd misses him every time she comes over.

He misses the sounds she makes when he's inside her, misses the distant gleam of her eyes when she's deep under and clinging to him with a shake in her hands.

It would irritate him, how deprived he feels after six months of knowing her, but he's too distracted by the carved-out, hollow feeling in his belly, by the expectant silence in his apartment, by the way 70 degrees suddenly feels just a bit too cold for the daytime.

He tries to fill the silence: rom coms from the 80s, self-conscious sad boy music from his college years, but they all sound a little tinny, like he's listening to them over a bad connection or from another room. Like he went to the concert and heard it live and now has to go back to the studio versions played over a speaker.

“What do you want,” she asks blankly, like she hasn’t dropped off the face of the earth, like he hasn’t been worrying about her nonstop for three weeks, like she didn’t wring every ounce of affection and adoration out of his heart with her bare hands and then ignore all of his calls.

“What do I- *Alina*,” he says, and he can feel his patience wearing thin. The beat of her front door against his fist still throbs under his skin. He flexes his hand at his side, looking at her beseechingly.

“What?” she snaps, as if he’s the unreasonable one.

“Will you just let me in? Please? I just want to talk to you.”

The door closes, and he can hear her sigh through her nose before the chain clicks and unlatches, and she opens the door again. Her face is bland and irritated, and that-

“Why have you been ignoring me?”

She huffs and turns away, lets him follow her into the apartment. He shuts the door behind him and she says, “I haven’t been *ignoring* you, I’ve been... busy, and-”

“That’s bullshit, Alina, you know it is. Tell me the truth, I think I at least deserve that.”

She sighs. All the fight leaves her body, he can see it eke out of her; her shoulders drop their defensive position around her ears, her face smoothes out into a weary pallor. Her fingers twitch at her sides, and he wants to reach out and hold them, run his thumb over her knuckles, press a kiss to her palm.

“Sasha-” the sound gets caught in her throat. He watches her pulse beat under her skin for a moment, living and moving and warm. If he put his thumb there he would feel her blood jump under his fingerprint, just millimeters away. His hand twitches.

“Do you want to sit down?” Her voice is quiet, she gestures to the couch.

As he sits, Paul Rudd comes to join him on the threadbare sofa, worn comfortable with time and attention, dark red velvet gone short under his legs and on the arm where countless hands have chafed along it restlessly or excitedly or mindlessly.

It’s an old couch. Older than both of them, most likely, and Aleksander thinks about Alina in a thrift store or an estate sale somewhere uptown, with Genya probably, discovering it and finding herself unable to leave it behind. He thinks about Zoya and Nikolai helping her carry it up three flights of stairs, Zoya and Alina lifting one side and Nikolai complaining good-naturedly that of course he was left to carry from the bottom of the stairs.

He rubs a thumb over the carved wooden detail on the arm, chipped on one side, and listens to the tick-tick of her electric stove as it heats up, the click of mugs that she pulls from the top cabinet.

“Almost a year ago,” she says, “I asked my boyfriend to move in with me.” The cat purrs in his lap, thunderously content as Aleksander runs his hand along his furry spine.

“And it didn’t go well,” Alina continues. Aleksander looks up at her as she says, “he said he didn’t want to, and then he broke up with me. And as he was breaking up with me, he told me that I was too clingy, and needy, and annoying, and that I didn’t have a personality of my own, and he never really liked being around me anyway.”

He can feel his stomach grow cold, the muscles of his heart working sourly as he tries to suppress the sharp tide of anger that rises behind his ribcage. Clingy and annoying. Irritation tightens in his jaw, and he chews on it, back and forth, letting it knot up into an ugly tangle under his teeth.

Her voice is stable, but he can see a tremble begin in her chin, and he wants nothing more than to go to her and take the teabags out of her hands and set them on the counter, to wrap her up in him and press her face into his chest, and maybe a month ago he would have. But he doesn't know what she wants now. It seems she doesn't, either.

And she isn't looking at him, anyway, focused entirely on the sugar she's dumping into one of the mugs, the one he knows without asking is for him.

"And a few weeks ago, I was out with Zoya and Nikolai, and Nikolai opened his big fat mouth-"

"As Nikolai is wont to do," he says, desperate for anything to ease the tight look on her forehead.

She smiles. "As Nikolai is wont to do. And he made a stupid, *stupid* joke about... you and me moving in together-" his chest tightens, "-and I know it was just a joke, and I know he's a fucking idiot, but I just... I don't know, I freaked out a little. It doesn't have anything to do with you, I promise." The kettle sings, and she turns the stove off with a sigh.

And he understands, as well as he can, why she bolted. He really does. The fear, the residual ache of being exposed and unloved. But this see-saw, back and forth between nothing and everything, he can't keep doing it.

"So..." he says. He's trying to be gentle, he's trying.

"So, I don't know if it's such a good idea if we keep... seeing each other." Her voice shrinks in a descending sequence, and he can't- he *cannot*. His hands go cold, stomach churning, grief sluicing through his gut like a hot, wet knife.

"And why is that?" The steadiness of his own tone surprises him.

“I just- I think I’m too romantic. I get caught up in things too easily. I’m too... I’m too needy.”

Too needy? That damned- he opens his mouth, determined to, if nothing else, assure her that she should in no way feel ashamed of herself, but she waves her hands at him in an arresting gesture, “I’m not saying it’s necessarily a bad thing, honestly, I just. I know myself, and I think I’m too... emotional, and too romantic, and yeah, probably too needy for a- a friends with benefits thing.”

This silly girl.

Aleksander lifts Paul Rudd off his lap and stands, quietly shushing the cat when he bleats out an indignant little *mrow*. He stares at Alina from across the narrow countertop, then circles it to stand in front of her so he can look a little closer. He notices when her pulse begins to tick visibly in her neck, her beating heart right in front of him.

“I just think,” she says, voice as thin as a sheet of paper, breathy like a noir femme fatale, which feels a little rich to Aleksander, “that I’m going to... develop,” her eyes dart to his lips, “...feelings.”

His heart squeezes, almost painful, and he cradles her face in his hand.

“*Baby*, ” he says, pitched low like he’s trying not to scare off a feral animal, and watches her eyes soften, face sweet and sad and perfect, “Whatever gave you the impression that you developing feelings is not exactly what I wanted the whole time?”

Her chin trembles in his palm. “Maybe,” and he reaches up to hold her face in both hands, “I like you needy and emotional.”

A shudder runs through her body, and she closes her eyes, turns her face into his hand.

“Has it ever occurred to you, sweetheart, to let someone else take care of you?”

She breathes, twice: in, out, in, out. “Sasha.”

“Alina. Open your eyes, darling.”

She does, and he gets to look at her some more, unbroken eye contact, her face in his hands. His belly swoops.

“Hello,” he says, and she echoes it back to him, barely a whisper, but he’ll take it with gratitude. He leans in to kiss one cheek, then the other.

“Let me take you to bed, and then let me take you to dinner.”

Her eyes are hazy and soft when she nods. “I think that would be nice,” she tells him. He strokes a thumb across her cheekbone, leans in and presses his nose to her neck, just taking in the scent of her, close to the skin, where she doesn’t let people go. She smells like her: like her coconut shampoo, like clean, dry skin and hair, a little bit like incense, a little bit like cat.

Behind her, he can make out the silken rise of steam coming off their tea, but it disappears into his peripheral vision, easily forgotten, because he’s much too distracted by the sweet tilt of Alina’s chin as she leans up to meet his kiss.

If it was up to Aleksander, he’d get an hour for every kiss, to properly take his time, open her up and kiss her the way she deserves, the way she should have been kissed each time before. He braces his thumbs on the side of her neck, just below the hinge of her jaw.

“Why do you always,” she pulls away, so he moves his mouth downward, a grateful, exploratory trail down her neck, and she gasps a little, “*look* at me like that?”

A laugh huffs its way out of his lungs, casting through his mouth and across his molars without being asked. He pulls off her neck, sparing a satisfied glance for the freckled red

marks he leaves behind, “look at you like what?”

“I don’t know, like you-” she swallows thickly, “like *that*. ”

Smooth, the feel of her skin under his finger, the gentle ridge of her cheekbone under his thumb. “Like what, Alina? Like I want you so badly I can’t think sometimes?” He kisses her mouth. “Like you’re the first thing I think about each morning and all I can think about for the rest of the day?” He kisses her chin. “Like I hate the days I don’t get to see you, and the past three weeks were a special kind of psychological torture I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy?” He closes his eyes and presses his forehead against hers.

“Like I don’t ever want to have to stop looking at you again?”

When he opens his eyes he finds hers glassy with tears, staring at him, trembling.

“Yeah,” she whispers, “like that, I guess.”

Aleksander laughs at her again and surges forward to capture her mouth, his grip on her face tightening, dragging her forward to get her as close as he can. She’s pressed up against him in one long, hot line, squirming in his grasp.

“Sasha,” she pants into his mouth, whining and needy.

“I know, baby.”

He backs her into her bedroom, hands on her hips to keep her close. He tries to ease her into bed, but she whines without pulling away from his kiss, hands reaching for the buttons on his shirt, and he says “okay, okay, just- let me,” undresses while she chases every inch of newly exposed skin, teeth and tongue and hands, like she’s trying to consume him, and he couldn’t be happier to let her.

As she shimmies out of her pajamas, sweatpants pooling on the floor next to her t-shirt, he breathes in the smell of her room, the faint, familiar scent of her detergent and some sweet candle: praline or macchiato or chai, something gourmand and comforting.

To his surprise, she doesn't protest when he pushes her down onto the bed, goes easily when he spreads her out, maps out the leylines of her body with his mouth, methodically taking in every hill and moor and valley, the cavern of her mouth, mountain peak of her nipple, each elbow ditch met with a hot, open kiss.

When he finally travels down past the tender flare of her hips and sets his mouth against her, she just sighs into it, threads a hand in his hair and tugs the way he likes: firm, enough to sting, to remind him she's real. He traces a circle around the fold of her cunt, just avoiding her clit, then ducks his tongue down to press flat against her entrance. She's already so soft and wet, he could slide inside her right now and meet no resistance.

He seals his mouth over her sex, tongue flat and broad, trying to inhale the taste of her, as much of her as he can get. She keens above him, one hand gripping her breast, rolling a nipple between thumb and forefinger, and even from here he can see she's already close. Her cunt clenches down on his tongue when he works it just inside her, stroking at the textured walls drenched with slick.

"Sasha," she gasps, "Sasha, I'm- you're gonna make me come, I'm so close."

The press of his fingers inside her is so easy, so soft, but for as soft and pliant as her sweet little pussy is, the force with which she clenches down pulls harshly, and he laughs as two of his joints pop.

"Eager," he comments under his breath, but he doesn't think she hears him, because he's laying his thumb against her clit and *pressing*, working up and down in a tight, hard motion, catching just under the hood where he knows she's so sensitive, and she's pulsing around his fingers and coming like a shotgun, shooting bolt upright in bed only to curl over him, bowing over his head and rutting her hips against his mouth.

Her fingernails scratch at his scalp, painful, but he doesn't mind, just keeps working at the throb of her orgasm, pulling it out of her in waves, kissing and sucking at her clit as he taps his fingertips up against the curve behind her pubic bone, wondering idly if he wants to take

the time to make her to squirt for him again. He knows he can do it, he's just not sure if he wants to wear her out like that tonight. Selfish, maybe, but he wants her present and awake, wants to look at her and watch her look back with seeing eyes.

"That's it, baby, give it to daddy, so sweet for me," he presses a kiss to the jut of her hip bone, "love the way you look when you come in my mouth."

As she comes down, he gently withdraws his fingers, one at a time, and skates his thumb up her wet slit, gathering slick before smearing it on her mouth, pushing his thumb inside, and he doesn't even have to prompt her to suck on it. She just does, accepting it eagerly, mouth pulling at it like she's been waiting for it, dying for it.

He gets to his feet, keeping his thumb in her mouth, uses it as leverage to push her back onto the bed, gripping her head in one hand with his thumb hooked on her lip. Spit gathers and slides down his wrist.

She lets him arrange her against the pillows the way he likes, propped up a little so he can see her face, one pillow under her hips so he can see her cunt. He spreads her legs wide so he can kneel between them, her thighs tossed over his carelessly.

Heat pools in his belly when she reaches down to touch her clit; it's just a brush, just enough to make her stomach tense, but he snatches her wrist and pulls it away. "Let me take care of you, Alina. Hands off." She wiggles, frowning, tries to pull away, and lets a short sound of protest out through her nose when he doesn't let her go.

"I just-"

Frustrated, she tries to touch herself with her other hand, and Aleksander reaches down and grabs her by that wrist, too, joining them in his left hand so he can hold her still. Her splayed fingers look like flowers, leggy aloe vera blossoms, gathered in his fist.

With the other, he lays a quick, sharp slap to her pussy, right on her swollen little clit.

Her hips jerk up at the contact, a small, wild squeal coming out of her.

“Alina,” he says, voice equally condescending and affectionate, “Don’t you want to be good for your daddy?”

She whimpers, chin trembling, and nods. “Yes, daddy.” Tears begin to glisten at the corners of her eyes, and he feels his gut clench, eager to see them coursing freely down her face.

“Then let daddy make you come, hm? That’s a good girl,” he says when she nods again, “That’s it. Daddy always takes care of you.”

The line of her neck is still tense, even as she relaxes again, sinking further into the bed, and he needs-

He ducks his head to kiss her, and she responds instantly, sighing into his mouth, pressing her face against his, hard, like she was just waiting for him.

“Want you inside me, Sasha, please,” she whispers, quieter than she’s been all night, like it’s a secret, like she can’t let anyone but him know it. A tear slides down her face. He nods, nose brushing against her lips.

“Okay.”

Pulling away just enough to line himself up with the plush slick of her entrance, he feels an acute ache hum in the bones of his chest. It’s familiar now, has been for a while, but this time it feels settled, like it’s figured out just where it needs to go, like it’s found a home, finally.

The head of his cock slips against her, a tease he’s too weak to draw out, and he pushes in, clinging to his last shreds of patience. It’s been a while, and though he’s got her nice and soft and wet and ready for him, it’ll still be something of a stretch.

One of those sheer, pretty sighs slips out of her, just the ghost of a sound that hovers in the air above them, voyeur and participant in the same moment. He rocks into her, satisfied to the point of smugness as her little sighs turn into gasps when he really starts to fuck her.

She whines with each thrust and her arms find themselves wrapped around his neck, fingers twisting in his hair like she needs something tying her down. Her legs match, twined around his waist, as if she can't stand the thought of him going anywhere, of being left empty and without him. The ache intensifies.

"Daddy, daddy, please, I'm-" she's a vision, writhing under him- on him- with a sweet, pained look on her face, orgasm hovering just out of reach, intangible and slippery. Her fingers clench in his hair, keeping rhythm with the pulse of her cunt around his cock.

"Come for me, sweet girl, let me see it," he pants, and slips a hand between them to roll her clit under his fingers, feeling the slick stretch of her entrance, and he wonders-

Gently, so gently, he slides the tip of his middle finger under the taut lip of her cunt. He keeps thrusting in and out, slow, and she looks dazed with arousal, eyes glassy and distant.

With each thrust in, he works his finger in a little deeper, stretching her pussy a little further, until it's all the way in. He cranes his head back to look, to see the tight, impossible spread of her little cunt around his cock and finger. Her arms around his neck loosen but don't fall away.

"You're so full," his voice is low and reverent as he stills inside her and takes in the sight: pink lips stretched to their limit, shiny and wet, clenching like a vise on his finger. He can feel it- almost more intimate this way- every time her breath hitches and she clamps down.

He looks up to see her face, and her expression is so pitiful- mouth dropped open like she's forgotten how to close it, brows drawn together so tragically it looks like she's in pain. If he didn't want to see her face when she comes on his cock, he'd kiss her.

He draws out, slowly, then pushes back in to hear her whine. She's so good, always so good for him. He loves how sweetly she takes him, so eager to please, so eager for affection. He

loves the way she loses herself in it, trusts him to take her there and back safely. He loves the point of her chin, the apple of her cheek, the tiny, shallow scars on her forehead. He loves-

He loves.

He tucks it away; it's not for here, not for now. Later- when, he's not sure- he'll make sure she knows it, deep in her bones, knows it the same way she knows the sun will rise in the east and set in the west, the same way she knows how to weave her hair into a braid without looking, the way she knows her own tender and needy heart.

He'll give it to her now, so that she can discover it for herself later.

"Sasha," she gasps, warning, "Sasha, I'm gonna come, oh my god, please, please, make me come. I'm so close, it's so- I'm-"

"Yes, yes, yes," he tells her, and *pushes*, grinds his cock against her, touches her clit, a slick, throbbing little heartbeat under his thumb.

When she comes with a thready shout, her whole body twitches and shudders and jolts against him, and he tightens his arm around her to gather her closer, to let her ride it out in his embrace. Just wants a little more contact.

She winds her hips up, fucking herself on his cock, pulsing and throbbing around him, and the experience is completely new when he feels it on his finger as well, each sensation heightened acutely.

He talks her through it, telling her how perfect she is, so damn sweet it should be a crime: "you're perfect, Alina, do you hear me? Perfect. Made for me, just for me. Perfect and sweet and *mine*."

She kisses him frantically, rutting up onto him, nodding against his mouth as her lips drag over his, "yes, yes, yes, Sasha, yes."

And he thought he had a little longer, was going to try and make her come at least twice more, but then she tells him, gasping the words into his open mouth, “it’s so good, Sasha, you fuck me so good. Nobody else ever touched me like this, it’s just you, just you. I just want you,” and-

It shoots through him like a stab of electricity, lighting up every nerve ending in his body and brain, and he gives a chest-deep groan, pulling his finger out of her cunt so he can hold her with both arms as he fucks into her.

He bites at her lips, wants to make her bleed, too.

“Tell me you’re mine, Alina, I want to hear it,” he says, voice rough and stuttering, “tell me you’re my baby.”

Alina keens, chin trembling, and nods, “I am, I am, Sasha, I’m yours, I’m your baby. I just wanna be yours.”

She kisses him, softer than he deserves, as he comes inside her, and she makes such a sweet noise for him when she feels it. Another one of those wispy sighs as he rocks into her cunt, pushing his come deep, like he can stain her permanently if he tries hard enough.

After a moment, he feels her clench around his still-twitching cock, and he hisses quietly when she grinds down on him. It’s too soon, he’s too sensitive, but she still looks a little fizzy, a little wired, so he pulls away from her and brings a hand to her clit.

“Come on, baby, one more time for daddy.”

He works his fingers over the swollen pulse of it until she’s whimpering and coming again, throbbing around his cock almost painfully. Her eyes are squeezed shut and her mouth is slack and wet.

Ideally, he'd stay inside her forever, just keeping her full and sated like she deserves, but he can tell by the unconscious little humming noises she's making that she'll probably be asleep soon, so he pulls out of her carefully. Pearly beads of his come follow, and he gently pushes it back inside with his fingers, smiling when she makes a little squeaking sound.

She's pliant and loose as she ever is after getting the sense fucked out of her, and he easily arranges her against him, curled under his chin, a soft and sleepy mess of a girl. He traces a line up her back, fingers light, and murmurs, more to himself than to her, "Nikolai..."

Evidently, she's awake enough to hear the irritation in his voice, because she swats at him weakly. "Oh, don't start."

"I didn't say anything."

She just hums and falls silent again, and he lets it be for a moment.

"Do you want me to beat him up?"

Alina barks out a surprised laugh, and then just keeps laughing, laughs until she's crying into his neck, smearing wet, happy tears everywhere. "No, I don't think so. He's quite... fragile, you'd probably do some permanent damage."

He laughs, just a breath, sending the hair on the top of her head fluttering.

"Besides," she says, "then you'd have to deal with Zoya."

Aleksander grimaces, a horrified shiver running through him involuntarily.

"I thought so," Alina says primly. She lets out a deep sigh, more content than anything, and the cadence of her breath slows, keeping time with his.

The silence weighs, heavy, for a few minutes; Aleksander's anxious mind chases its tail, and he can't quite keep himself from reaching for reassurance.

"You going to let me stay this time?" His voice is muffled, mouth smushed against her head.

"Yes, Sasha," she says quietly. "I want you to stay. I..." she clears her throat softly and traces a finger along his collarbone- back and forth, a nervous gesture.

"I wanted you to stay- *I* wanted to stay. The other times. Was scared." She tucks her face into his neck.

He makes an *mm* sound.

Alina's stomach growls audibly between them. She laughs and says, "I know you said you wanted to take me to dinner," and his heart stops for a second, "but maybe we could do a snack first."

And he buries a laugh in her hair, tells her okay, and when he reaches down to pull his shirt off the floor and thread her arms through the sleeves, she doesn't freeze or protest or hedge. She only smiles, sleepy and small, lets him fasten one of the buttons under her breasts, and leans in to be kissed when he's finished.

He pulls on his pants, doesn't bother fastening them, and she follows him, half-dressed, to the kitchen, perches on a stool at the counter as he rifles through her cabinets in search of anything quick, but when she tries to offer suggestions, he waves a hand at her.

"Hush. Just sit there and look pretty for me."

He doesn't catch the way her neck turns red and her eyes smile at him.

Paul winds around the feet of her stool as she watches him whisk flour and sugar and baking powder, her electric stove ticking as it heats up.

Maybe it should feel awkward, after the intensity of the whole evening, but the silence feels friendly and unassuming. He keeps his eyes carefully on the pancake mix, letting her look her fill without feeling self-conscious.

The spiral eye of the stove glows a living red when he sets the skillet down and pours the batter, trying to keep the circles small and even.

“Have you ever seen When Harry Met Sally?” he asks, watching a pancake closely so it doesn’t burn.

Alina looks at him with a confused smile. “Yes,” she says suspiciously, “have you?”

He nods, turns a pancake over, and lets the silence rest while he watches it cook. “You know the part at the end, at the New Year’s Eve party, when Billy Crystal confesses his love for her all breathless and irritated, and he says ‘when you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with someone, you want the rest of your life to begin as soon as possible?’ You remember that part?”

She’s silent. He looks up from plating the pancakes to find her watching him closely, dark eyes round and serious. The plate makes a dull clinking noise when he sets it down on the formica countertop.

“Yes,” she says, very quiet, and swallows audibly.

Aleksander just nods and sets out a pair of forks and knives.

As he turns to pull the syrup out of the fridge, he hears her say “oh,” and smiles to himself.

Chapter End Notes

this is the fault of many, namely jen & ella to both of whom i am wedded, L for being too nice, darling meg who got her own special & stupid baghra reference, the genius and coward georgie, and my absolute and total wife wing

thank u <3

End Notes

for some reason the idea of aleksander morozova ending phone calls the same way as me (hanging up in the middle of a sentence for absolutely no reason) is extremely funny to me

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